PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1946

ELIZABETH HARDWICK
The Temptations of Dr. Hoffmann

PHILIP RAHV
Concerning Tolstoy

C. WRIGHT MILLS
The Competitive Personality

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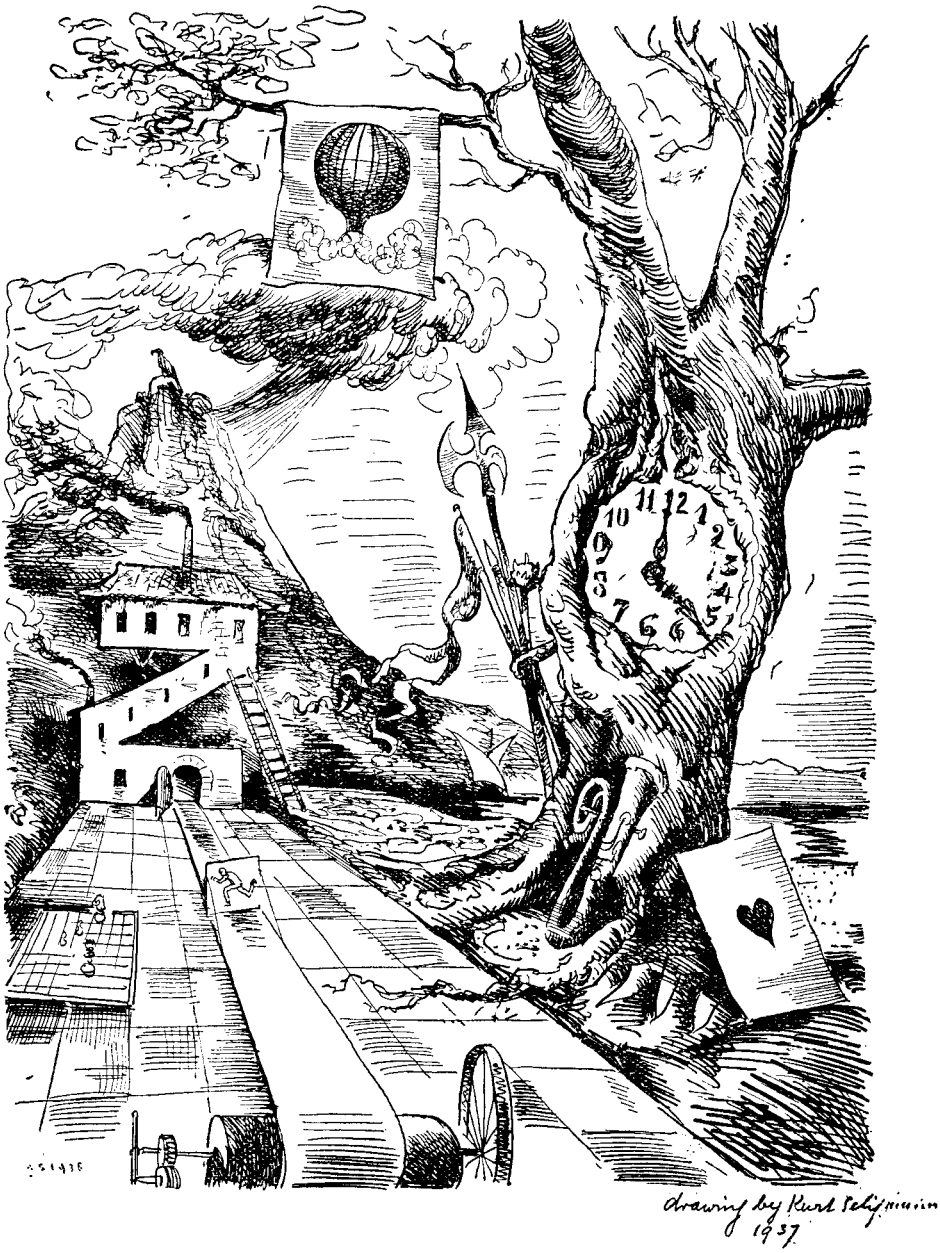

KURT SELIGMAN: *The House Z*

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The Temptations of Dr. Hoffmann

ELIZABETH HARDWICK

I HAD BEEN living for some time in the same house on Riverside Drive with Dr. Felix Hoffmann and his wife before I actually met them. He was known to me as a prominent German Protestant theologian and when I saw his name on one of the mailboxes in my house I was not without curiosity about him. Had I not developed a friendship with this family I believe that winter in New York would have been unendurable, because I was living under conditions that often seemed to me almost uncivilized. For reasons of economy I had taken a room in one of those co-operative apartments around Columbia University in which many ladies, most of them well past middle age, live. The place was clean and had once been a fine family apartment with a good view of the river, but most of the ladies living there were quite mad and had a way of dividing into warring camps over a foolish issue like the answering of the telephone and sometimes they engaged in the most distressing fights in the hall. I felt rather depressed about all of them because they were lonely and idle and, since I found one as pathetic as the other, I was inclined to be a bit unscrupulous and to try to take both sides in their arguments. This was disastrous; each side repeated what I had said and I sometimes trembled for fear of retribution when I put my key in the door. Also, the place was very bad for my studies. If I had had the courage to ignore the ladies I might have got along better, but though I kept telling myself that haughtiness was far more honest than the hypocritical friendliness I had assumed, I found myself irrevocably committed to the latter. It was too bad because it was very cold that winter and I often stayed in the library longer than I wished rather than go home to face my "friends." Such social life as I had was spent mostly in drugstores where I drank so many cups of coffee I was constantly dizzy.

Living in this atmosphere, it perhaps isn't surprising that I should have welcomed meeting someone else in the house and that I should have thought the Hoffmann household extraordinarily attractive. I

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met Dr. Hoffmann by accident. One day as I was entering the building I heard my name called and turned around to meet a young man from Kentucky who was studying at the theological seminary where Dr. Hoffmann held a post. I had known this friend was in New York but we had never made an effort to see each other because we hadn't been compatible in Kentucky. At college he had been an overbearing and sanctimonious young man who had never distinguished himself in anything except as captain of the debating team, in which capacity he delivered energetic arguments on safe subjects. Also, he was a member of the Presbyterian church to which my family belonged and I used to get very impatient with my mother's accounts of his brilliance in Sunday School and the fine way he represented our young people's group at the Vacation Bible Study Conference held in North Carolina every summer. Whenever I attacked him as a fool, my mother always maintained that I didn't like him because he wasn't *fast* like the other young men in the town. It was certainly true that he wasn't very spirited, but that was merely a matter of choice because the church was very lax on social questions and prided itself, I thought, on being too sophisticated to condemn horse racing from the pulpit and on the fact that the minister was more likely to be stirred to eloquence by Lloyd C. Douglas' latest book than by hellfire and damnation. We left the delineation of the vivid results of enmity with God to the crude Baptists.

I saw immediately that the young man from Kentucky hadn't changed much, though he had become a little more self-consciously sedate. He spoke with extreme care and always seemed to be searching his mind for some epigrammatic nonsense that would relieve him of the obligation to pursue any thought beyond two sentences, unless he had engineered the conversational turn himself. His attempts at wit had always been forced and he had now become one of those boring people who tell anecdotes about historical personages. I could hardly make a statement without his interrupting to repeat what Mark Twain, Will Rogers, or G. K. Chesterton had said upon a similar subject.

It was this friend who asked me to go to Dr. Hoffmann's for a sort of open house which the Doctor occasionally held for students. I wasn't averse to dropping in on my neighbors, especially since the affair was very informal and it wasn't necessary to have an invitation, but I was puzzled that my friend should be anxious to take me along. During the course of the afternoon I came to the conclusion that he had fallen under the influence of Dr. Hoffmann and wanted to let me

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know that he had somewhat altered his opinions on a few of the issues that had separated us in college. He seemed to go out of his way to talk loudly enough for me to hear him say he thought the Negroes were treated shamefully in the South and once he even drew me aside and stated that perhaps we weren't so far apart now because he considered himself a Christian Socialist. But he was still as dull as ever and I suspected he was no more popular in the theological school than he had been at home.

Because of a friend who had studied under him in Germany and who admired him extravagantly, I had read some of Dr. Hoffmann's writings and was anxious to observe him. From the first I approached him as a rather romantic figure and I suppose I somewhat exaggerated the uniqueness of his personality. More than anything else I wondered how he could endure his students. Dr. Hoffmann had a youth of intense political activity behind him; he had been thrown out of his own country and in America had come to be considered a sort of symbolic representation of the potential virtues in the German character. His philosophy was a mixture of Christian despair—he was famous for an interpretation of original sin—and political idealism, but I could not understand either position in his terms without his belief in Christ as the ultimate reality. The students, on the other hand, were ordinary boys who would later be in the Presbyterian pulpits throughout America and they seemed as far away from the kind of violence Dr. Hoffmann had known as they were from the mysterious depths his theology sometimes reached. I thought, watching the boys, that I had never seen a healthier and more cheerful group of people. They were bursting with energy and self-confidence, a condition no doubt due to their lack of dissipation but which seemed foolhardy to me since they all accepted that, regardless of good works, each might be arbitrarily predestined for eternal damnation.

Physically, Dr. Hoffmann looked rather different each time I glanced at him. At first I had only noticed that he appeared somewhat corpulent, the typical family man, serious, settled, and a bit colorless. Later—perhaps it was the changing expression on his face—I was struck by his youthful charm that was not, at moments, without a slight suggestion of well-mannered and patient boredom. His students flattered him openly and it was apparent he enjoyed this attention even though he may not have taken it seriously. I don't think he looked upon himself as a man of importance; a few times, when he was relaxed and on the outside of the conversation, he betrayed

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a downcast aspect of his nature, as if he were preoccupied with annoying problems. The Hoffmann apartment was pleasant and unremarkable. There were so many books, newspapers, and periodicals around that the living room had a haphazard appearance which as much as anything else made one feel comfortable there. I talked to Mrs. Hoffmann and found her a cordial woman who seemed to be intelligent, if rather smugly anti-intellectual. She was in every way as affable as she was undistinguished. The only complaint against fate she thought fit to mention was a sinus infection which had made her life in New York less gratifying than it might otherwise have been. Later in the afternoon the Hoffmann's daughter appeared. She was about fifteen years old and her parents called her Elsa though she spoke of herself as *Elsie,* probably because the former was too German. Before the party was over Dr. Hoffmann and his wife had learned that I was a neighbor and they both asked me to visit them whenever I felt like it. They seemed entirely sincere in their wish to see me and I felt sure we would come to know each other better.

When I left the young man from Kentucky told me, and with a touch of unaccountable pride, that Dr. and Mrs. Hoffmann were the most amazing couple he had ever met. His main reason for thinking this, apart from his admiration for the man, was that Mrs. Hoffmann was a resolute atheist and yet she and her husband had managed to make a happy life together. I shrugged my shoulders indifferently and my friend seemed disappointed by my weak response. Immediately I guessed that because I had broken away from the church in Kentucky he had supposed Mrs. Hoffmann's lack of belief would impress me. For some reason I couldn't help speaking sharply and saying, "I'm not interested in atheists. The world's full of those. What intrigues me is whether or not Dr. Hoffmann believes in God."

"Do you think there's any question of it?" he said confidently. He looked down at me as if I were stupid past all belief.

Due to the fact that I had no respect for him I felt free to speak in the most dogmatic fashion and did so. "Well, you can't have it both ways," I said. "If you want to be religious nowadays you ought to give up all contact with the world because the two no longer mix. What sort of religion is it that is completely outside our daily life and the principles upon which our behavior is based?"

My friend had assumed his most lofty manner, but it was somehow lacking in authenticity. I suppose he felt that he looked like a serene and holy man, but I was reminded of the professional equanimity of skillful salesmen.

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"I'll have to talk to you about that sometime," he said. We had now reached the door of my apartment and after a few strained attempts at civility we said good-by.

I felt ashamed immediately because it was clearly not my duty to dissuade this boy and, furthermore, it was arrogant of me to take for granted that he and Dr. Hoffmann and the rest really didn't have faith. I again thought of Dr. Hoffmann with his liberal magazines, his devotion to radical causes, and I couldn't help but conclude that no matter what the man believed his source of action was the assumption that we are good or bad according to the luck of our worldly situation. I remembered his pleasant, heavy face, his generous sociability, and the singular brilliance with which he was credited. In thinking of him I realized that I had already begun to seek an explanation for his religiosity, that I was treating it as an eccentric character trait like, for instance, hypochondria. Though I had known him only a few hours, I couldn't quite imagine him on his knees.

It took about a month for my friendship with the Hoffmanns to become established. When I ran into them in the hall we arranged meetings and after a while I felt completely at ease in their home—so much so that I was closer to them than to anyone I knew in New York that year. It wasn't altogether strange that our friendship developed so rapidly. Though they were involved in the ordinary social obligations attendant upon a professorship and Dr. Hoffmann was quite busy with his writings, his lectures, and his committees, they still found time for me and kept asking me back. I discovered several reasons for this and one was that Dr. Hoffmann, like many contemporary religious people, was not really happy unless he was in the company of nonbelievers. Most of his colleagues and nearly all of his students bored him. The students tended to look upon their work as vocational training and Dr. Hoffmann often made little jokes about the seminary as a place for acting lessons, since many of the boys seemed more anxious to perfect their "delivery" than to pursue religious and philosophical studies. Also, I suspected he missed participation in political movements that had urgency and he used to tell me about fist fights between the Nazi and anti-Nazi students in Germany with such nostalgia that I was rather astonished. He had been in America since 1936 and was quite a success here, but one could not fail to sense that his personality was far from fulfilled by his life. The areas of emptiness he revealed struck me so deeply that I became absorbed in his private life and often forgot the perplexing matter

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of his religious convictions. Indeed it was hard for me to remember that he was a believer, because he no more demonstrated, except in a professional way, that crucial difference between him and me than a lawyer can be said to indicate a highly personal sense of justice by applying himself to his cases.

Another reason Dr. Hoffmann allowed so much of his time to be taken up by friends was that he was by nature enormously convivial. I became more and more conscious of his great need for diversion, so conscious in fact that I underestimated the other side of him until I heard one of his lectures. As a teacher he was aloof and solemn and wonderfully impressive. His lectures, like some of the sermons he gave me to read, were best when he was most mystical and theoretical. Once I told his wife that I thought his real flair for literary composition, the beautiful, wild tone that got into the expression of his thoughts, came from his reluctance to mention God in any specific sense. She made no comment upon my observation and I don't know whether or not I understood him correctly. At first I accepted Dr. Hoffmann's conviviality uncritically, until I began to notice there was something wrong in his relation to his wife and daughter. When I was the only outsider present I felt one thing quite strongly: Dr. Hoffmann and his wife really didn't like each other. This condition was so clear and undeniable it somehow wasn't at all dramatic. The Hoffmanns were constantly rebuking each other, but the sarcasm never got enough out of control to be definitely unpleasant and I think most people thought it proved their love rather than the contrary. These curious and intrepid scoldings had been indulged in for so long that I imagined they had come to accept them as the inevitable fate of earthbound men and women. The daughter, Elsa, was in league with the mother and whenever she was in the house I felt an extra tension. Everything was made worse by the fact that Dr. Hoffmann was pathetically devoted to his daughter and took extreme pride in her.

In my own private feelings toward the Hoffmanns I did not take sides in this unbalanced domestic situation. Dr. Hoffmann interested me much more than his wife did, but I found her extremely likeable. At times I thought her a bit too even-tempered and wished she had more passion and vigor. Oddly enough she was most alive when she was talking about her headaches and physical distress because her intimacy with this pain seemed to give her a hold upon the world and its evil possibilities. Yet no matter what she said or how ill she became, she was essentially an ordinary woman without any sort of rebellion

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in her that could crystallize into action. If she was an atheist she was certainly a mild one and refused to take part, I gathered, in religious affairs, not because she was in opposition to her husband but due to her inability to organize enough mental energy to take either side. Still for all her indolence she was always precipitating the kind of quarrel that characterized the family after one got to know it. The quarrels, or at least those I had observed in the past, were meaningless and sterile because nothing was changed by them, they had no function beyond themselves, and no one was the victor. When I dropped in one afternoon I came upon one of these disputes.

Dr. Hoffmann looked rather tired and more withdrawn into himself than I was accustomed to seeing him. Mrs. Hoffmann, as if to explain his mood, said, "You missed it. Felix has just been talking to a friend from Germany. They were reminiscing about Mrs. Hoffmann, my husband's mother, and what good times they used to have in her house."

"Is your mother living?" I asked Dr. Hoffmann.

He was absent-mindedly tapping his finger against his wrist watch and he didn't look up to answer me. I could see the plump line of his jaw and could imagine him as a sturdy, industrious, and amiable youth in Germany. "Yes," he said. "One gets so little word. Yes, thank God she's alive."

"Felix and his friend had out all the family pictures and they were talking about the way she sang and her amusing moods," Mrs. Hoffmann continued. "I often grieve about her. She's a good woman."

Dr. Hoffmann suddenly jerked his head back and there was such a weary and oppressed expression on his face, one side of his mouth twitched in a brief, nervous spasm and his fingers still tapped against his watch, that I marveled at his ability to control his voice. "No hypocrisy, please! You didn't think she was a good woman. As for your grieving, I can't look inside your heart!"

I happened to notice Elsa as her father spoke. She had been sitting in her chair, lazily turning the pages of the school book in her lap. Elsa was in every way a bright and typically American girl and at times it was hard for me to connect her with her parents or any European past. Though she was a bit too broad-faced to be called a beauty, she was strong and handsome and seemed to have every equipment for a successful life. When I looked at her she was trembling with anger and I was amazed her parents didn't notice the state she was in. She was silent until her mother, still in that flat good

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humor that reduced every violence of emotion to nothing, said, "You will give our friend here the wrong impression. I always got along as well with your mother as she would allow."

And then, as if to prove her good faith, she insisted upon opening the album of pictures, pointing to her mother-in-law's image, and saying to me, "Look at her! Hasn't she a fine figure? And you can just barely get an idea of her beautiful hair. The picture doesn't do her justice!" Since I couldn't see over Mrs. Hoffmann's shoulder I was unable to judge.

"I don't think she's pretty," Elsa said. "Just because she happens to be my father's mother am I to think her pretty if she isn't?"

Elsa had a quiet, small and melodious voice, but it could be decisive and full of inordinate rage at times. The girl's personality was split wide open with contraries and I never knew precisely what I thought of her; if I accepted as final the rather rigid self-consciousness she usually showed around adults, she would betray my impression by the alarming conviction with which she could, when provoked, take her part in the world.

"Elsa!" Mrs. Hoffmann said, winking at me. I think, however, she meant this weak exclamation as a rebuke to her daughter.

Dr. Hoffmann began to cough, but this did not successfully conceal the agitation he felt. His brow was drawn into a severe frown and it was painful to see him thus insulted and hurt by his daughter. All his attention was for Elsa and I believed he had forgotten his wife or, perhaps, she had lost her capacity to touch him deeply and so she was really outside the situation. Dr. Hoffmann stood up and I saw that he was going to leave the house and guessed, from the automatic way in which he did this, that he usually resolved domestic troubles by disappearing for a short time. He rushed into the hall and got his coat. When he was ready to leave he stopped by my chair and said, "I'm sure you will excuse me. I want to go out for a walk."

After we heard the door shut Mrs. Hoffmann said to Elsa, "Why in the world did you say such a thing? I don't understand you." The mother was so calm, her optimism so steadfast, that I thought she showed a lack of feeling. In any case, I was sure she didn't comprehend the delicate and precarious way her husband was put together or to what extremities of emotion her daughter was being driven.

"I only spoke the truth," Elsa said. "I've heard how badly his mother treated you." She was straining to say more and was obviously baffled by her mother's reprimand when she had so clearly summoned

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up all her courage to act on the side of righteousness: her mother's side always. "You told me that when I was born his mother faked a heart attack and that he was at her bedside instead of yours." The girl made me uncomfortable and I watched with embarrassment her raw, even ruthless, intensity, which in its lack of subterfuge impugned her decorous parents. "That was wrong, wasn't it?" she insisted, giving a heavy stress to the word *wrong*.

"Tsk! Tsk!" Mrs. Hoffmann said gaily. "I'm always astonished by you. How in the world did you remember that story? Really, it's amazing! I'd forgotten all about it myself." I hadn't thought it possible the situation could be turned into a joke, but that was what was happening. Mrs. Hoffmann was smiling and shaking her finger at her daughter as if she were teasing her about a childish love affair.

"You told me yourself!" Elsa repeated. She was nervously working her fingers in and out as if they were cramped and I sympathized with her frustration even though her temperament appalled me. Evidently she could no longer bear to have her feelings exposed and she got up, like some defeated but still recalcitrant crusader, and said she was going to her room to read the Bible.

I was taken aback by this in spite of the fact that I had known Elsa went to church and that she had had a solid Protestant education. When we were alone, Mrs. Hoffmann whispered to me, "She's very religious, and in quite a funny way. Not like her father." I was hoping she would clarify this by telling me something about Dr. Hoffmann but I was disappointed. She said merely that Elsa was strait laced and more interested in her fear of God than in the teachings of Christ, and then she gave up altogether her attempt to discriminate.

I knew what she meant, or at least I thought I detected in Elsa some of the feelings I had once experienced. While we were talking Dr. Hoffmann returned and I was relieved to find he had managed during his walk to regain his composure. He was a little out of breath and, though he still seemed dejected, his eyes snapped vigorously and he was enough interested in conversation to make me repeat what I had said about his daughter's religious turn. I told him I thought Elsa was going through a dreary period of Protestant asceticism and that she was searching for prohibitions and would have welcomed discipline of a more rigorous kind than his system demanded. He neither agreed nor disagreed with me. (My only justification for my analysis was my remembrance of the elation I had once felt in giving up dancing and picture shows for a year. The joy in my own purity was intensified by the actions of my older sisters who in that same year

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fell very far from grace and spent most of their energy getting and keeping boy friends so that they were much too exhausted to read the Bible before retiring. My prayers were all for them, because I knew I was *saved*.) Of course, I hastened to add that I was only twelve at the time of this spiritual exaltation and that the whole thing had suddenly vanished, never to return. Dr. Hoffmann was always attentive to anecdotes about the Bible Belt, but he knew so little about that part of America that his interest was more anthropological than anything else and sometimes, in his presence, I felt as if I'd been brought up in the Fiji Islands. Once I heard him repeat a story I had told him about a prostitute who, during a temporary conversion, had said that her downfall was due to a compulsion to answer every knock on her door because she thought the caller might be Jesus. He evidently enjoyed his picture of this woman very much, but I don't think he understood that she was entirely serious—or so she had seemed to me when I heard her harangue on the streets of my home town. I actually felt, I suppose, that she made as much sense on religion as Dr. Hoffmann and I was bewildered that he should find her comical.

The conversation returned to his daughter, but he did not mention the outburst that had occurred. His refusal to go over the incident made me think he had not worked out a satisfactory point of view toward it. The only thing important about his relation to Elsa was that she didn't like him and he could hardly have been expected to recognize that; instead he was under the delusion that everything the child said was dictated by reason.

Things took a turn for the worse when Mrs. Hoffmann's sufferings became so acute she had to go to Arizona. Elsa was plainly hysterical about her mother's departure, but after she acknowledged the inevitability of the separation she settled down into a morbid resignation that rather chilled me. Poor Mrs. Hoffmann was terrified by her new adventure. She hadn't traveled much in America and her feeling of loneliness was already upon her, even as she planned the trip. She said, trying to laugh, "They'll think I'm a spy out there."

The actual parting was very touching. At the last moment Dr. Hoffmann slyly suggested that his wife might do well to take along some reprints of his articles. I saw the titles of those he chose for her and they were such things as *Democracy and Christianity* and *American Interpretations of Christ*. Mrs. Hoffmann took them as if they were a kind of passport, which perhaps they were.

Without the mother the house was somewhat changed, but I

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continued to go there frequently, perhaps more often than I should have because it made me neglect my work. Whenever I came home early, intending to stay in my room, I no sooner got settled than one of the ladies came in to talk to me. My most frequent visitor was a woman who wanted to tell me over and over about the fine position she had once had in the City Hall at Akron and the dramatic way in which she had been cheated out of it. When she started to talk I always excused myself from listening by saying that I had an appointment with the Hoffmanns. There was no real connection between the meaning of Dr. Hoffmann and my living among these pathetic, broken ladies, but I found that I always saw the two conditions as necessary to each other and I looked upon the apartment downstairs as a kind of repudiation of the life I was living. I fooled myself into believing Dr. Hoffmann was happier than my isolated acquaintances, which was ridiculous because he was only more interesting and intelligent. My reason told me that the comfort of his apartment, the presence there of more than one person, didn't make any of his problems less painful. Symbolically he, too, had lost a fine position in Akron through a thousand relentless treacheries, and yet the exterior circumstances of his existence so well conformed to my idea of all life was supposed to hold for an adult that I persisted in thinking his household benefited by the fact that each stood in a set position to the other—wife, husband, father, daughter, etc.—and that they were, thereby, excluded from the kind of loneliness I saw about me and often felt myself. Dr. Hoffmann evidently had something of the same notion because he was always saying to me, as if to reassure me that I was welcome, "Ah, don't stay up there by yourself." He would make a round gesture with his arm to indicate that in his house there was a meaningful contrast to those rooms upstairs which were meant for single occupants.

As the time passed Elsa became more and more ascetic and more and more dictatorial with her friends. Often I heard her on the telephone defending her belief that lipstick was the work of the devil. She applied herself diligently to her studies, but nothing seemed to relieve her unhappiness and discontent. The sad thing was that there was no way for the tension between Elsa and her father to dissipate itself, but an argument did occur one night that seemed to me significant, not so much in what it decided as in the fact that Dr. Hoffmann appeared to me to become aware then of the complexity of his nature and to see how it had ruled his family life.

It was a bad night and a wet, unpleasant snow was falling out-

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side. The wind was blowing furiously up Riverside Drive and New York was depressing. I had not been in the Hoffmann apartment for almost a week and I was more than a little anxious to learn how things were going there. Both the father and daughter seemed in low spirits when I entered and I could guess that Elsa was being more silent than usual and that her father was again desperate about her. He kept looking at her as if he were pleading for some unspecified favor.

"How is Mrs. Hoffmann?" I asked, thinking of her good luck in being away from the wind and the cold.

"Oh, she gets along as well as could be expected," the Doctor answered solemnly. "She writes that it is very cold in Germany and that she didn't get the last package I sent her. She has always been delicate and I don't see how she can survive the winter. Poor soul! It's so hard on the very old and the very young." He rubbed his hand over his forehead and sighed.

"I'm sorry to hear about your mother, but I was really asking after your wife," I said. Immediately I recognized my error.

Dr. Hoffmann, with that fatal foolishness that was also his strength and nobility, had spoken in good faith and was unprepared for the ferocity with which his daughter turned upon him. Elsa grunted with pleasure at my remark and it must have offered her the final proof on this tormenting subject. I couldn't really dislike her for what followed. She wasn't mean or petty; she was caught in the fury of her own emotions and in her wretchedness must have believed she was defending her mother, though in actuality I felt her purpose was to commit an act of aggression against her father, to punish him for his innocence. "Perhaps the first Mrs. Hoffmann is more important in this house!" she said, forcing herself with all the grim self-righteousness in her nature to look at her father as she spoke. "You are always talking about her. You don't seem to worry about how we'll save the money to keep Mother in Arizona. You have never worried about her. Not even when I was born!" Her nice, adolescent voice had become very shrill and she was starting to cry.

"What are you talking about? When you were born?" her father asked, utterly bewildered by her tone and accusation. He had turned quite pale, but, as always, was very patient with his daughter.

"I know that you were at your own mother's bedside when I was born. She has always come first. You don't love us half as much!" Elsa had become very childish and was sobbing wildly. Her father did not seem to recognize her childishness any more than he noticed the

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unnatural maturity she sometimes showed. To him she was an equal. He loved her and she was crying!

Just as he was preparing to speak to her and to reassure her, a strange thing happened to him. He looked away from Elsa, or rather she seemed to vanish from his sight, and that frown of anguish I had often seen on his face returned. I thought that a deep shiver passed through his body, the physical evidence of a sudden revelation that had enormous implications for him.

"Why didn't she come here with us?" Elsa went on desperately. "She's nothing but a Nazi anyway. She would rather die than leave Germany. It's a wonder you didn't stay with her, since you've never been happy away from her."

With great effort her father drew his attention back to her. "What are you saying? What are you saying?" he kept repeating. For a moment he seemed to entertain the hope that she might deny what she had said, but this had to be abandoned. I imagined he knew already that he could never forget Elsa's words no matter what happened; he was now too deep in his own recognition.

Elsa's venom spent itself quickly, as if she had, in that same second when her father was staggering under a monstrously increased burden of emotion, gone hollow and empty with the exhaustion of release. She had just barely enough breath for her whimpering and sobbing and to say, "I'm sorry." Then she went quietly and quickly into her room and closed the door behind her.

I was anxious to get away and was relieved that Dr. Hoffmann had ignored me. He was a man of such passion that his feelings could shut him off from the world and he sat there wrinkling his mouth, shaking his head, fighting his tears as if he were alone. I got up and tip-toed to the door, but he stopped me. "Do you suppose it's true?" he asked. I offered no answer, but I could tell from the despair in his voice that he had answered his own question.

"Good night, Dr. Hoffmann," I said, as casually as I was able.

He seemed not to hear me and as I closed the door he was whispering to himself, "Mother, release me! Release me!"

Back in my room I felt guilty about Dr. Hoffmann and hoped to put him out of my mind, but I found that in spite of my good intentions I was trying to put his life together and to find some answer to the question of his religious faith. A rather neat case was available to me. This despondent man was struggling to the depths of his being with a real situation, one that had marked and maimed him long before he was old enough to know God, theology or philosophy.

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There was no doubt that Dr. Hoffmann's life had been dominated by his mother and, since his father was hardly ever mentioned, it seemed reasonable to assume he hadn't had a father in the most necessary and vital emotional sense. And, I went on, this abiding vacancy in his feeling and experience had led him, at a time when most of his contemporaries accepted the opposite view, to seek his fulfillment in a Heavenly Father.

Before going to bed I looked out of the window. It had stopped snowing and the Drive was almost deserted except for the buses that went by from time to time. As I stood there I saw Dr. Hoffmann walking below. I recognized his posture and when he stopped to cross under the street light I got a glimpse of his face, but I couldn't see him clearly enough to know what mood he might be in. Acknowledging again Dr. Hoffmann's physical existence—there he was below me, walking alone, breathing, thinking, perhaps suffering—I became dissatisfied with the way in which I had tried to organize his personality. What good did it do me to know that he was, as they say, searching for a father? I lacked specific details of his experience and even if I had known him forever I could never have felt certain of my abstraction.

Not long afterward I met the young man from Kentucky on the street and he was very cool to me. That was no surprise because our contempt for each other had never been violated except on that afternoon at the Hoffmanns, and that was, in his case, like a brief but violent drunkenness which he could not account for. Again we were forced to recognize the great differences in our temperament, divergencies which had manifest themselves long, long ago. He knew me, I'm sorry to say, for what I had been in college: the village atheist and Stalin fan. (He did not know I had repented about Stalin if not about God.) I had always found him unbearably tedious, but, to be truthful, I suppose I might have endured his dullness if it had not been for his piety. Now it was a relief to get back to this natural distaste for each other and I somehow felt he was more real today than he had been at the Hoffmanns. We had hardly exchanged a word before I noted that he had also repudiated Dr. Hoffmann and that his flirtation with liberalism had suffered a rude disenchantment. Strangely enough I soon began to see that the primary disappointment with Dr. Hoffmann centered around the fact that the Doctor and I got along so well. I at first found this difficult to accept, but then my friend had always taken important steps under the influence of the

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most irrelevant prejudices. He wasn't interested in me because I had nothing to do with his life, but I think he unconsciously demanded that Dr. Hoffmann and I should have been divided by my lack of belief in the principles which governed Dr. Hoffmann's understanding of the world. The fact that we had remained friendly seemed to tell him more about Dr. Hoffmann than about me—and perhaps he was right.

He said to me, "What do you talk to Dr. Hoffmann about? Religion?"

"Religion?" I said. "We have never discussed that seriously." I could not explain this, but it was true. "We talk mostly about politics and people."

"Are you still in doubt about Dr. Hoffmann's belief in God?"

"Certainly," I said, "but that's merely a private opinion."

My friend gave me a weak smile and departed. I felt quite angry with him, but I suppose the real truth was that we were both angry with Dr. Hoffmann. My friend and I knew where we stood with each other, but neither of us had a clear idea of Dr. Hoffmann. I was suddenly weary of researches into the problem of the Doctor's religious faith, even though I didn't feel I had been entirely unsuccessful. There was that sad business about his mother and nothing he could say or do would alter the fact that his past and present were overcast by her ominous and insatiable shadow. Illogically perhaps, my knowledge of Dr. Hoffmann's participation in this prevalent maladjustment of his times brought him down to earth and gave me the courage to state once more my conviction that he couldn't approach God or think of Christ as His Son any more than I could. . . . Or could he?

I suppose the truth cannot be known. These things are inexplicable, but in naming them so I did not for a moment definitely affirm his faith. That my mind stubbornly refused to do—all my observations pointed to the contrary.

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Concerning Tolstoy*

PHILIP RAHV

THE critic's euphoria in the Tolstoyan weather. Tolstoy and literature. The green twig and the black trunk. The art of Tolstoy is of such irresistible simplicity and truth, is at once so intense and so transparent in all of its effects, that the need is seldom felt to analyze the means by which it becomes what it is, that is to say, its method or sum of techniques, In the bracing Tolstoyan air, the critic, however addicted to analysis, cannot help doubting his own task, sensing that there is something presumptuous and even unnatural, which requires an almost artificial deliberateness of intention, in the attempt to dissect an art so wonderfully integrated that, coming under its sway, we grasp it as a whole long before we are able to summon sufficient consciousness to examine the arrangement and interaction of its component parts.

Tolstoy is the exact opposite of those writers, typical of the modern age, whose works are to be understood only in terms of their creative strategies and design. The most self-observant of men, whose books are scarcely conceivable apart from the ceaseless introspection of which they are the embodiment, Tolstoy was least self-conscious in his use of the literary medium. That is chiefly because in him the cleavage between art and life is of a minimal nature. In a Tolstoyan novel it is never the division but always the unity of art and life which makes for illumination. This novel, bristling with significant choices and crucial acts, teeming with dramatic motives, is not articulated through a plot as we commonly know it in fiction; one might say that in a sense there are no plots in Tolstoy but simply the unquestioned and unalterable process of life itself; such is the astonishing immediacy with which he possesses his characters that he can dispense with manipulative techniques, as he dispenses with the belletristic devices of exaggeration, distortion, and dissimulation. The fable, that specifically literary contrivance, or anything else which is merely in-

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vented or made up to suit the occasion, is very rarely found in his work. Nor is style an element of composition of which he is especially aware; he has no interest in language as such; he is the enemy of rhetoric and every kind of artifice and virtuosity. The conception of writing as of something calculated and constructed—a conception, first formulated explicitly by Edgar Allan Poe, upon which literary culture has become more and more dependent—is entirely foreign to Tolstoy.

All that is of a piece, of course, with his unique attitude toward literature, unique, that is, for a writer of modern times. For Tolstoy continually dissociated himself from literature whether considered matter-of-factly, as a profession like any other, or ideally as an autonomous way of life, a complete fate in the sense in which the French writers of Flaubert's generation conceived of it. In his youth a soldier who saw war at first hand, the proprietor and manager of Yasnaya Polyana, a husband and father not as other men are husbands and fathers but in what might be described as a programmatic and even militant fashion, and subsequently a religious philosopher and the head of a sect, he was a writer through all the years—a writer, but never a litterateur, the very idea repelled him. The litterateur performs a function imposed by the social division of labor, and inevitably he pays the price of his specialization by accepting and even applauding his own one-sidedness and conceit, his noncommitted state as witness and observer, and the necessity under which he labors of preying upon life for the themes that it yields. It is with pride that Tolstoy exempted Lermontov and himself from the class of "men of letters" while commiserating with Turgenev and Goncharov for being so much of it; and in his *Reminiscences of Tolstoy* Gorky remarks that he spoke of literature but rarely and little, "as if it were something alien to him."

To account for that attitude by tracing it back to Tolstoy's aristocratic status, as if he disdained to identify himself with a plebeian profession, is to take much too simple a view of his personality. The point is, rather, that from the very first Tolstoy instinctively recognized the essential insufficiency and makeshift character of the narrowly aesthetic outlook, of the purely artistic appropriation of the world. His personality was built on too broad a frame to fit into an aesthetic mold, and he denied that art was anything more than the ornament and charm of life. He came of age at a time when the social group to which he belonged had not yet been thoroughly exposed to the ravages of the division of labor, when men of his stamp could still resist the dubious consolations it brings in its train. Endowed with enormous energies, possessed of boundless egoism and of an equally boundless

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power of conscience, he was capable, in Leo Shestov's phrase, of destroying and creating worlds, and before he was quite twenty-seven years old he had the audacity to declare his ambition, writing it all solemnly down in his diary, of becoming the founder of "a new religion corresponding with the present state of mankind; the religion of Christ but purged of dogmas and mysticism—a practical religion, not promising future bliss but giving bliss on earth." No wonder, then, that while approaching the task of mastering the literary medium with the utmost seriousness, and prizing that mastery as a beautiful accomplishment, he could not but dismiss the pieties of art as trivial compared with the question he faced from the very beginning, the question he so heroically sought to answer even in his most elemental creations, in which he seems to us to move through the natural world with splendid and miraculous ease, more fully at home there than any other literary artist. Yet even in those creations the very same question appears now in a manifest and now in a latent fashion, always the same question: How to live, what to do?

In 1880, when Turgenev visited Yasnaya Polyana after a long estrangement, he wrote a letter bewailing Tolstoy's apparent desertion of art. "I, for instance, am considered an artist," he said, "but what am I compared with him? In contemporary European literature he has no equal. . . . But what is one to do with him. He has plunged headlong into another sphere: he has surrounded himself with Bibles and Gospels in all languages, and has written a whole heap of papers. He has a trunk full of these mystical ethics and of various pseudo-interpretations. He read me some of it, which I simply do not understand. . . . I told him, 'That is not the real thing'; but he replied: 'It is just the real thing'. . . . Very probably he will give nothing more to literature, or if he reappears it will be with that trunk." Turgenev was wrong. Tolstoy gave a great deal more to literature, and it is out of that same trunk, so offensive in the eyes of the accomplished man of letters, that he brought forth such masterpieces as *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and *Master and Man,* plays like *The Power of Darkness,* also many popular tales which, stripped of all ornament, have an essential force and grace of their own, and together with much that is abstract and over-rationalized, not a few expository works, like *What Then Must We Do?,* which belong with the most powerful revolutionary writings of the modern age. For it is not for nothing that Tolstoy was always rummaging in that black trunk. At the bottom of it, underneath a heap of old papers, there lay a little *mana*-object, a little green twig which he carried with him through the years, a twig

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of which he was told at the age of five by his brother Nicholas—that it was buried by the road at the edge of a certain ravine and that on it was inscribed the secret by means of which "all men would cease suffering misfortunes, leave off quarreling and being angry, and become continuously happy." The legend of the green twig was part of a game played by the Tolstoy children, called the Ant-Brothers, which consisted of crawling under chairs screened off by shawls and cuddling together in the dark. Tolstoy asked to be buried on the very spot at the edge of the ravine at Yasnaya Polyana which he loved because of its association with the imaginary green twig and the ideal of human brotherhood. And when he was an old man he wrote that "the idea of ant-brothers loving by clinging to one another, though not under two arm-chairs curtained by shawls but of all mankind under the wide dome of heaven, has remained unaltered in me. As I then believed that there existed a little green twig whereon was written the message which would destroy all evil in men and give them universal welfare, so I now believe that such truth exists and will be revealed to men and will give them all it promises." It is clear that the change in Tolstoy by which Turgenev was so appalled was entirely natural, was presupposed by all the conditions of his development and of his creative consciousness. In the total Tolstoyan perspective the black trunk of his old age represents exactly the same thing as the green twig of his childhood.

Even the crude heresies he expounded in *What is Art?* lose much of their offensiveness in that perspective. In itself when examined without reference to the author's compelling grasp of the central and most fearful problems of human existence, the argument of that book strikes us as a willful inflation of the idea of moral utility at the expense of the values of the imagination. But actually the fault of the argument is not that it is wholly implausible—as a matter of fact, it is of a long and reputable lineage in the history of culture—as that it is advanced recklessly and with a logic at once narrow and excessive; the Tolstoyan insight is here vitiated in the same way as the insight into sexual relations is vitiated in *The Kreutzer Sonata.* Still, both works, the onslaught on modern love and marriage as well as the onslaught on the fetishism of art to which the modern sensibility has succumbed, are significantly expressive of Tolstoy's spiritual crisis —a crisis badly understood by many people, who take it as a phenomenon disruptive of his creative power despite the fact that, in the last analysis, it is impossible to speak of two Tolstoys, the creative and the noncreative, for there is no real discontinuity in his career. Though

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there is a contradiction between the artist and the moralist in him, his personality retains its basic unity, transcending all contradictions. Boris Eichenbaum, one of the very best of Tolstoy's Russian critics, has observed that the spiritual crisis did not operate to disrupt his art because it was a crisis internally not externally determined, the prerequisite of a new act of cognition through which he sought to re-arm his genius and to ascertain the possibility of new creative beginnings. Thus *My Confession,* with which Tolstoy's later period opens and which appeared immediately after *Anna Karenina,* is unmistakably a work of the imagination and at the same time a mighty feat of consciousness.

Six years after writing *What is Art?* Tolstoy finished *Hadji Murad* (1904), one of the finest *nouvelles* in the Russian language and a model of narrative skill and objective artistry. Is not the song of the nightingales, that song of life and death which bursts into ecstasy at dawn on the day when Hadji Murad attempts to regain his freedom, the very same song which rises in that marvelously sensual scene in *Family Happiness,* a scene bathed in sunlight, when Masha, surprising Sergey Mikhaylych in the cherry orchard, enjoys for the first time the full savor of her youthful love? *Hadji Murad* was written not less than forty-five years after *Family Happiness.* And in *The Devil*—a moral tale, the product, like *The Kreutzer Sonata,* of Tolstoy's most sectarian period and extremest assertion of dogmatic asceticism—what we remember best is not Eugene Irtenev's torments of conscience, his efforts to subdue his passion, but precisely the description of his carnal meetings in the sun-drenched woods with Stepanida, the fresh and strong peasant-girl with full breasts and bright black eyes. The truth is that in the struggle between the old moralist and the old magician in Tolstoy both gave as good as they got.

The rationalist and anti-Romantic in Tolstoy. Sources in the eighteenth century. Divergence from the intelligentsia. Creative method. Tolstoy has been described as the least neurotic of all the great Russians, and by the same token he can be said to be more committed than any of them to the rational understanding and ordering of life and to the throwing off of romantic illusions. Unlike Dostoevsky, he owes nothing either to the so-called natural school of Gogol or to the Romantic movement in western literature. The school of Gogol is a school of morbidity, whereas Tolstoy is above all an artist of the normal—the normal, however, so intensified that it acquires a poetical truth and an emotional fullness which we are astounded to discover in

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the ordinary situations of life. Analysis is always at the center of the Tolstoyan creation. It is the sort of analysis, however, which has little in common with the analytical modes of such novelists as Dostoevsky and Proust, for example, both characteristically modern though in entirely different ways. While in their work analysis is precipitated mainly by deviations from the norm, from the broad standard of human conduct, in Tolstoy the analysis remains in line with that standard, is in fact inconceivable apart from it. Dostoevsky's "underground" man, who is a bundle of plebeian resentments, is unimaginable in a Tolstoyan novel. Even in Tolstoy's treatment of death there is nothing actually morbid—certainly not in the description of the death of Prince Andrey in *War and Peace* and of Nikolay Levin in *Anna Karenina.* As for *The Death of Ivan Ilych,* that story would be utterly pointless if we were to see Ivan Ilych as a special type and what happened to him as anything out of the ordinary. Ivan Ilych is Everyman, and the state of absolute solitude into which he falls as his life ebbs away is the existential norm, the inescapable realization of mortality. Nothing could be more mistaken than the idea that Tolstoy's concern with death is an abnormal trait. On the contrary, if anything it is a supernormal trait, for the intensity of his concern with death is proportionate to the intensity of his concern with life. Of Tolstoy it can be said that he truly lived his life, and for that very reason he was so tormented by the thought of dying. It was a literal thought, physical through and through, a vital manifestation of the simplicity with which he grasped man's life in the world. This simplicity is of a metaphysical nature, and in it, as one Russian critic has remarked, you find the essence of Tolstoy's world-view, the energizing and generalizing formula that served him as the means unifying the diverse motives of his intellectual and literary experience. It is due to this metaphysical simplicity that he was unable to come to terms with any system of dogmatic theology and that in the end, despite all his efforts to retain it, he was compelled to exclude even the idea of God from his own system of rationalized religion. Thus all notions of immortality seemed absurd to Tolstoy, and his scheme of salvation was entirely calculated to make men happy here and now. It is reported of Thoreau that when he lay dying his answer to all talk of the hereafter was "one world at a time." That is the sort of answer with which Tolstoy's mentality is wholly in accord.

The way in which his rationalism enters his art is shown in his analysis of character, an analysis which leaves nothing undefined, nothing unexplained. That systematization of ambiguity which marks

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the modern novel is organically alien to Tolstoy. Given the framework in which his characters move we are told everything that we need to know or want to know about them. The tangled intimate life, the underside of their consciousness, their author is not concerned with; he sets them up in the known world and sees them through their predicaments, however irksome and baffling, without ever depriving them of the rationality which supports their existence. For just as in Tolstoy's religiosity there is no element of mysticism, so in his creative art there is no element of mystery.

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Tolstoy did not pass through the school of Romanticism, and perhaps that is the reason he never hesitated to strike out the dark areas in the space in which he outlined his leading figures. He has few links with the literary culture evolved in Russia after 1820; the fact is that he has more in common with his literary grandfathers than with his literary fathers. Insofar as he has any literary affiliations at all they go back to the eighteenth century, to Rousseau, to Sterne, to the French classical drama, and in Russia to the period of Karamzin, Zhukovsky, Novikov, and Radichev. He has their robustness and skepticism. His quarrels with Turgenev, his inability to get on with the liberal and radical writers grouped around the *Contemporary,* a Petersburg periodical edited by the poet Nekrasov in which Tolstoy's first stories were published, are explained not so much by personal factors, such as his intractability of temper, as by the extreme differences between the conditions of his development and those of the Russian intelligentsia, whose rise coincides with the appearance of the plebeian on the literary scene. Tolstoy's family background was archaistic, not in the sense of provincial backwardness, but in the sense of the deliberate and even stylized attempt made by his family—more particularly his father—to preserve at Yasnaya Polyana the patriarchal traditions of the Russian nobility of the eighteenth century. It was a conscious and militant archaism directed against the "new" civilization of Petersburg, with its state-bureaucracy and merchant princes. The young Tolstoy was scornful of the "theories" and "convictions" held by the writers he met in Petersburg in the 1850's; instead of putting his trust in "theories" and "convictions" he relied on those Franklinesque rules and precepts of conduct with which he filled his diaries—rules and precepts he deduced from his idea of unalterable "moral instincts." In Nekrasov's circle he was regarded as a "wild man," a "troglodyte"; and in the early 1860's, when he set out on his first European tour, Nekrasov and his friends hoped that he would return in a mood of agreement with their notions

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of education and historical progress. Nothing came of it, of course, for he returned armed with more of those "simplifications" that cut under their assumptions. But if the Westernizers found no comfort in Tolstoy, neither did the Slavophils. The latter's ideology, with its forced and artificial doctrine of superiority to the West, was also aligned with plebeian social tasks; at bottom it represented the discomfiture of a small and weak plebeian class in a semifeudal society, a discomfiture idealized through national messianism. It was an obscurantist ideology incompatible with Tolstoy's belief in self-improvement and in the possibility of human perfection. Moreover, in Tolstoy's approach to western culture there was no distress, no anger, no hostility. He was never put off by it, for he considered European culture to be a neutral sphere the products of which he could appropriate at will, and in any order he pleased, without in the least committing himself to its inner logic. He felt no more committed by his use of western ideas than the French-speaking gentry in *War and Peace* feel obligated to import the social institutions of France along with its language. Thus Tolstoy was able to sort out western tendencies to suit himself, as in *War and Peace,* where he is to some extent indebted for his conception of Napoleon to certain French publicists of the 1850's and 60's, who in their endeavor to deflate the pretensions of Napoleon III went so far in their polemics as also to blot out the image of his illustrious ancestor. Again, in that novel he is partly indebted for his so-called organic idea of war to Proudhon's book *La Guerre et la Paix,* which came out in a Russian translation in 1864. (Tolstoy had met Proudhon in Brussels in March, 1861.) And the arbitrary way in which he helped himself to the ideas of western thinkers is shown by the fact that he entirely ignored Proudhon's enthusiastic affirmation of Napoleon's historical role. The West was the realm of the city, a realm so strange to Tolstoy that he could regard it as neutral territory. The city was essentially unreal to him; he believed in the existence solely of the landowners and of the peasants. The contrast between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, which Merezhkovsky and after him Thomas Mann have presented in terms of the abstract typology of the "man of spirit" as against the "man of nature," is more relevantly analyzed in terms of the contradiction between city and country, between the alienated intellectual proletariat of the city and the unalienated patriciate-peasantry of the country.

Much has been written concerning the influence of Rousseau on Tolstoy, but here again it is necessary to keep in mind that in western literature we perceive the Rousseauist ideas through the colored screen

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of Romanticism while in Tolstoy Rousseau survives through his rationalism no less than through his sensibility. In point of fact, the Rousseauist cult of nature is operative in Tolstoy in a manner that leads toward realism, as is seen in his Caucasian tales, for instance. If these tales now seem romantic to us, that is largely because of the picturesque material of which they are composed. A narrative like *The Cossacks* is actually turned in a tendencious way against the tradition of "Caucasian romanticism" in Russian literature—the tradition of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Marlinsky. Olenin, the protagonist of *The Cossacks,* is so little of a Romantic hero that he is incapable of dominating even his own story; the impression of his personality is dissipated as the attention shifts to the Cossack lad Lukashka, to Daddy Eroshka, and to the girl Marianka. Think what Chateaubriand would have made of a heroine like Marianka. In Tolstoy, however, she is portrayed in an authentically natural style, with all the calm strength, unawareness of subjective values, and indifference of a primitive human being. Though she is a "child of nature" and therefore an object of poetical associations, she is seen much too soberly to arouse those high-flown sentiments which "nature" inspires in Romantic poets like Novalis or even the Goethe of *Werther.* Where the Romantics convert nature into a solace for the trials of civilization, into a theater of lyrical idleness and noble pleasures, Tolstoy identifies nature with work, independence, self-possession.

Compared with Pierre, Prince Andrey, or Levin, Olenin is a weak hero, but he is important in that in his reflections he sums up everything which went into the making of the early Tolstoy and which was in later years given a religious twist and offered as a doctrine of world-salvation. The primacy which the issue of happiness assumes in Olenin's thoughts is the key to his Tolstoyan nature. "Happiness is this," he said to himself, "happiness lies in living for others. That is evident. The desire for happiness is innate in every man; therefore it is legitimate. When trying to satisfy it selfishly—that is, by seeking for oneself riches, fame, comforts, or love—it may happen that circumstances arise which make it impossible to satisfy these desires. It follows that it is these desires which are illegitimate, but not the need for happiness. But what desires can always be satisfied despite external circumstances? What are they? Love, self-sacrifice." In these few sentences we get the quintessence of the Tolstoyan mentality: the belief that ultimate truth can be arrived at through common-sense reasoning, the utilitarian justification of the values of love and self-sacrifice and their release from all otherworldly sanctions, the striving for the simplification of existence which takes the form of a

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return to a life closer to nature—a return, however, involving a self-consciousness and a constant recourse to reason that augurs ill for the success of any such experiment.

Tolstoy's art is so frequently spoken of as "organic" that one is likely to overlook the rationalistic structure on which it is based. This structure consists of successive layers of concrete details, physical and psychological, driven into place and held together by a generalization or dogma. Thus in *The Cossacks* the generalization is the idea of the return to nature; in *Two Hussars* it is the superiority of the elder Turbin to the younger, that is to say, of the more naïve times of the past to the "modern" period. (The original title of the story was *Father and Son.*) The binding dogma in *Family Happiness* is the instability and deceptiveness of love as compared with a sound family life and the rearing of children in insuring the happiness of a married couple. Yet the didacticism of such ideas seldom interferes with our enjoyment of the Tolstoyan fiction. For the wonderful thing about it is its tissue of detail, the tenacious way in which it holds together, as if it were a glutinous substance, and its incomparable rightness and truthfulness.

Parallelism of construction is another leading characteristic of the Tolstoyan method. In *War and Peace,* in the chronicle of the lives of the Bolkonsky and Rostov families, this parallelism is not devised dramatically, as a deliberate contrast, but in other narratives it is driven toward a stark comparison, as between Anna and Vronsky on the one hand and Kitty and Levin on the other in *Anna Karenina,* or between two generations in *Two Hussars,* or between Lukashka and Olenin in *The Cossacks.* One writer on Tolstoy put it very well when he said that in the Tolstoyan novel all ideas and phenomena exist in pairs. Comparison is inherent in his method.

His early *nouvelles* can certainly be read and appreciated without reference to their historical context, to the ideological differences between him and his contemporaries which set him off to confound them with more proofs of his disdain for their "progressive" opinions. Still, the origin of *Family Happiness* in the quarrels of the period is worth recalling. At that time (in the 1850's) public opinion was much exercised over the question of free love and the emancipation of women; George Sand was a novelist widely read in intellectual circles, and of course most advanced people agreed with George Sand's libertarian solution of the question. Not so Tolstoy, who opposed all such tendencies, for he regarded marriage and family life as the foundations of society. Thus *Family Happiness,* with its denigration of love and of equal rights for women, was conceived as a polemical rejoinder to

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George Sand, then adored by virtually all the Petersburg writers, including Dostoevsky.

The faith in family life is integral to Tolstoy. It has the deepest psychological roots in his private history, and socially it exemplifies his championship of patriarchal relations. It is a necessary part of his archaistic outlook, which in later life was transformed into a special kind of radicalism, genuinely revolutionary in some of its aspects and thoroughly archaistic in others. *War and Peace* is as much a chronicle of certain families as an historical novel. The historical sense is not really native to Tolstoy. His interest in the period of 1812 is peculiarly his own, derived from his interest in the story of his own family. He began work on *Anna Karenina* after failing in the attempt to write another historical novel, a sequel to *War and Peace*. And *Anna Karenina* is of course the novel in which his inordinate concern with marriage and family life receives its fullest expression.

The existential center of the Tolstoyan art. Tolstoy as the last of the unalienated artists. So much has been made here of the rationalism of Tolstoy that it becomes necessary to explain how his art is saved from the ill effects of it. Art and reason are not naturally congruous with one another, and many a work of the imagination has miscarried because of an excess of logic. "There may be a system of logic; a system of being there can never be," said Kierkegaard. And art is above all a recreation of individual being; the system-maker must perforce abstract from the real world while the artist, if he is true to his medium, recoils from the process of abstraction because it is precisely the irreducible quality of life, its multiple divulgements in all their uniqueness and singularity, which provoke his imagination.

Now there is only one novel of Tolstoy's that might be described as a casualty of his rationalism, and that is *Resurrection*. The greater part of his fiction is existentially centered in a concrete inwardness and subjectivity by which it gains its quality of genius. In this sense it becomes possible to say that Tolstoy is much more a novelist of life and death than he is of good and evil—good and evil are not categories of existence but of moral analysis. And the binding dogmas or ideas of Tolstoy's fiction are not in contradiction with its existential sense; on the contrary, their interaction is a triumph of creative tact and proof of the essential wholeness of Tolstoy's nature. The Tolstoyan characters grasp their lives through their total personalities, not merely through their intellects. Their experience is full of moments of shock, of radical choice and decision, when they confront themselves in the terrible and inevitable aloneness of their being. To

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mention but one of innumerable instances of such spiritual confrontation, there is the moment in *Anna Karenina* when Anna's husband begins to suspect her relation to Vronsky. That is the moment when the accepted and taken-for-granted falls to pieces, when the carefully built-up credibility of the world is torn apart by a revelation of its underlying irrationality. For according to Alexey Alexandrovitch's ideas one ought to have confidence in one's wife because jealousy was insulting to oneself as well as to her. He had never really asked himself why his wife deserved such confidence and why he believed that she would always love him. But now, though he still felt that jealousy was a bad and shameful state, "he also felt that he was standing face to face with something illogical and irrational, and did not know what was to be done. Alexey Alexandrovitch was standing face to face with life, with the possibility of his wife's loving some one other than himself, and this seemed to him very irrational and incomprehensible because it was life itself. All his life Alexey Alexandrovitch had lived and worked in official spheres, having to do with the reflection of life. And every time he stumbled against life itself he had shrunk away from it. Now he experienced a feeling akin to that of a man who, while calmly crossing a precipice by a bridge, should suddenly discover that the bridge is broken, and that there is a chasm below. That chasm was life itself, the bridge that artificial life in which Alexey Alexandrovitch had lived. For the first time the question presented itself to him of the possibility of his wife's loving some one else, and he was horrified at it."

It is exactly this "standing face to face with life," and the realization that there are things in it that are irreducible and incomprehensible, which drew Tolstoy toward the theme of death. Again and again he returned to this theme, out of a fear of death which is really the highest form of courage. Most people put death out of their minds because they cannot bear to think of it. Gorky reports that Tolstoy once said to him that "if a man has learned to think, no matter what he may think about, he is always thinking of his own death. All philosophers were like that. And what truths can there be, if there is death?" That is a statement of despair and nihilism the paradox of which is that it springs from the depths of Tolstoy's existential feeling of life; and this is because the despair and nihilism spring not from the renunciation but from the affirmation of life; Tolstoy never gave up the search for an all-embracing truth, for a rational justification of man's existence on the earth.

The fact is that Tolstoy was at bottom so sure in his mastery of life and so firm in his inner feeling of security that he could afford to

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deal intimately with death. Consider the difference in this respect between him and Franz Kafka, another novelist of the existential mode. In Kafka the theme of death is absent, not because of strength but rather because of neurotic weakness. He was ridden by a conviction, as he himself defined it, of "complete helplessness," and baffled by the seeming impossibility of solving even the most elementary problems of living, he could not look beyond life into the face of death. He wrote: "Without ancestors, without marriage, without progeny, with an unbridled desire for ancestors, marriage, and progeny. All stretch out their hands toward me: ancestors, marriage, and progeny, but from a point far too remote from me." That is the complaint of an utterly alienated man, without a past and without a future. Tolstoy, on the other hand, was attached with the strongest bonds to the patrician-peasant life of Yasnaya Polyana, he was in possession of the world and of his own humanity. His secret is that he is the last of the unalienated artists. Hence it is necessary to insist on the differences not so much between him and other artists generally as between him and the modern breed of alienated artists. It is thanks to this unalienated condition that he is capable of moving us powerfully when describing the simplest, the most ordinary and therefore in their own way also the gravest occasions of life—occasions that the alienated artist can approach only from a distance, through flat naturalistic techniques, or though immense subtleties of analysis, or through the transposition of his subject onto the plane of myth and fantasy.

But, of course, even Tolstoy, being a man of the nineteenth century, could not finally escape the blight of alienation. In his lifetime Russian society disintegrated; he witnessed the passing of the old society of status and its replacement by a cruelly impersonal system of bourgeois relations. Tolstoy resisted the catastrophic ruin of the traditional order by straining all the powers of his reason to discover a way out. His so-called conversion is the most dramatic and desperate episode in his stubborn and protracted struggle against alienation. His attack on civilization is essentially an attack on the conditions that make for alienation. The doctrine of Christian anarchism, developed after his conversion, reflects, as Lenin put it, "the accumulated hate, the ripened aspiration for a better life, the desire to throw off the past—and also the immaturity, the dreamy contemplativeness, the political inexperience, and the revolutionary flabbiness of the villages." Still, the point of that doctrine lies not in its religious content, which is very small indeed, but rather in its formulation of a social ideal and of a utopian social program.

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The Competitive Personality

C. WRIGHT MILLS

For liberals, competition has never been merely an impersonal mechanism regulating the economy of capitalism. It has been a guarantee of political freedom, a system for producing free individuals, and a testing field for heroes. These have been the alibis of the liberals for the hurt that competition has caused the people ground between the big sharp edges of its workings.

In every area of life, liberals have imagined independent individuals freely competing so that merit might win and character develop: in the free contractual marriage, the protestant church, the voluntary association, the democratic state, as well as on the economic market. Competition is the way liberalism would integrate its historic era; it is also the central feature of liberalism's style of life.

The hero of liberalism has exemplified the ways of competition in every sphere of life, but it was in the economic sphere that his merit came out most clearly, and it was by virtue of his business career that he attained power and glory and even the legendary purity of which heroes are made.

As the worlds of monopoly spread out their grasp, the classic exemplar of liberalism, the old captain of industry, took on, at least in his cruder images, a somewhat bloated and overbearing shape. By the twentieth century he had been replaced in the business world by other types of economic men, among them the industrial rentier and the corporation executive, the little business and white collar men, as well as a type we shall presently describe as the new entrepreneur. None of these have successfully filled the heroic place of the old, undivided captain of industry.

The public image of the rentier is not that of a productively competitive man; he is either the stealthy miser or the lavish consumer. He doesn't live the business-wise life of competition, and even the liberal economists dislike his economic role. The corporation executive has never been a popular middle-class idol; he is too cold and high with impersonal power. On the engineering side, he is part of inexorable

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Science, and no economic hero; and on the business side, he is correctly seen as part of the big finance.

It was the little man of business, with all his engaging human characteristics, who became the hero of liberalism in the early twentieth century. He has been seen as the somewhat woebegone inheritor of the old captain's tradition, even if only by default. The harder his struggle has become, the more sympathetic and the more heroized his image has been drawn; yet his plight has been a sad one, for he cannot live up to the heritage by which he is burdened.

The laws and planning of the Progressive Era, the muck-raking, the square deals and new freedoms were, at least verbally, attempts to buck up the little businessman, that he might better live up to the carefully presented image of him. Much of the New Deal was dealt in his honor, lest he become a forgotten man. And in the decade after 1933, he became even more officially the hero of the liberal system; no less than 390 bills in his behalf were introduced for consideration by the Congress.

The Monographs and Hearings of the Temporary National Economic Committee are the last great scholarly and official monument to liberalism's little hero. Like other large attempts in behalf of things as they are imagined or hoped to be, the TNEC fetishizes competition and heroizes little business. But it does so under an enormous burden of fact. Only the necessary screen of political rhetoric, the peculiar structure of political representation, and the myopia induced by small-town life has kept this senatorial fetish and this heroic image alive. Now that the TNEC is well buried by war, we may treat it as a symbol,* having positive as well as negative references. For underneath its rhetoric and resting on its facts, we may discern the present role of competition as well as some new types of economic men and women, who are living a new competitive life in the age of corporate bureaucracy.

What the million dollars' worth of TNEC facts demonstrate, no matter how they are arranged, is the detailed accuracy of Veblen's remark that competition is by no means dead, only now it is chiefly "competition between the businessman who controls production, on

* An excellent case study and partial summary of the Hearings has recently been written by David Lynch: *The Concentration of Economic Power,* Columbia University Press (New York, 1946). Some of the TNEC series have been brought up through the war in a publication of the Smaller War Plants: "Economic Concentration and World War II," U. S. Senate, 79th Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 206 (Washington, 1946).

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the one side, and the consuming public, on the other side; the chief expedient in this business-like competition being salesmanship and sabotage." What the TNEC documents was already well supposed, but now the documentation is directly from the mouths of the men who run things. In telling of the manner in which competition has been hedged in by giant corporations, and by groups of smaller corporations acting collectively, they have made clear the locus of the big competition and the masklike character of liberalism's rhetoric.

Yet for the benefit of their imaginary hero, the senators, and their experts, have persisted in fetishizing this mask of big business. They have proposed that the good old captains of industry be given a rebirth with the full benefit of governmental midwifery.

Charles Beard has remarked that this proposal resembles not a mouse creeping out of a mountain of fact but a mere squeak. Yet it remains the best that the official liberal has to say about the economic facts of life. In continuing to see competition as salvation from complicated trouble, the priestlike senators in charge of the ceremony naturally fall into the old petty-bourgeois complaints; and the experts, perhaps for the record, fall in with the senators. Now they are together in the big volumes with their thin little wisdom. But their wisdom is nostalgic, and their offerings are dwarfed by the great facts of the modern economy. Their mood ought to be the mood of plight, but they have succeeded in setting up a bright image of the little businessman, who could be rehabilitated as the hero of their system, if only competition were once more to prevail.

II

This liberal hero, the little businessman, has a tendency to forget the senatorial rhetoric put out in his behalf; he doesn't seem to want to develop his character by free and open competition. Last year in six middle-sized cities, arbitrarily selected samples of little businessmen were asked if they thought "free competition was by and large a good thing." With authority and vehemence they all answered, Yes, of course, what do you mean? Then they were asked, "Here in this, your town?" Yes, they said, but now hesitating a little. Finally: How about here in this town in furniture, or groceries—or whatever the man's specific line was. Their answers were of two sorts: Yes, if it's fair competition, which turned out to mean something very simple and understandable: If it doesn't make me compete. The second type of answer also adds up to the brotherliness of the little businessmen, and their competitive opposition to the public: Well, you see, in cer-

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tain lines, it's no good if there are too many businesses. You ought to kinda keep the other fellow's business in mind. The little businessman wants to become big, not by directly eating up the other fellow's business in competition, but by the indirect ways and means practiced by his own particular heroes—those already big. In the dream life of the little businessman, the sure fix is replacing the open market.

But if the little businessman is going back on his liberal spokesmen, he cannot really be blamed, for the liberal spokesmen, without knowing it, have also been going back on their little business hero. Only government, these spokesmen say, can save little business; they would *guarantee* by law the chances of the small business stratum. And if you guarantee a chance, it is no longer a chance; it is a sinecure. What this means is that all the private and public virtues that self-help, manly competition, and cupidity are supposed to foster would be denied the little businessman. The government would expropriate the very basis of political freedom and the flourishing of the free personality. If, as the chairman of the Smaller War Plants Corporation has said, "Democracy can only exist in a capitalistic system in which the life of the individual is controlled by supply and demand," then it is all over with democracy. However, the chairman adds, that to save capitalism, the government "must prevent small business from being shattered and destroyed." In the new way of salvation, inherited from the Progressive Era, the old faith in supply and demand is replaced by the hope of governmental aid and legalized comfort.

Big business doesn't have to compete and doesn't; little business sometimes has to and always hates it; and all the while, liberal government is trying to ration out the main chance, thus helping to destroy the old meaning of competition as a style of life.

III

In the old style of life, the way up, according to the classic pattern of liberalism, was to establish a small business enterprise and to expand it by competition with other such enterprises. That was the economic cradle of the free personality and, given the equality of opportunity and of power that it assumed, the guarantee of political democracy. The new way up is the white collar way: to get a job within a governmental or a business bureaucracy and to rise, according to the rules that prevail, from one prearranged step to another. For some 75 per cent of the urban middle class, the salaried employee component, this fate replaces heroic tactics on the open market.

Before each rung of the fixed ladders, the salaried employees

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may compete with one another, being in training for the next step; but their field of competition is too hedged in by bureaucratic regulation to give issue to the results expected from open competition across a free market. It is more likely to be seen as grubbing and backbiting: a bureaucracy is no testing field for heroes. The great, main chance of old becomes a series of small calculations, stretched out over the working lifetime of the individual. And these new middle classes are slowly beginning to give up their independence, in favor of a declaration of collective dependence: some 14 per cent of them are now in trade unions. They are beginning to dream of going up together, as members of modern businesslike unions.

This shift from business enterpriser to white collar employee, along with the decline of the free farmer, is the master occupational change of twentieth-century social structure. It is a terrible blow at the old competitive life and at the personal and political consequences that the old pattern was supposed to have.

The white collar man *enters* the public view as a tragic figure. He takes up where the little businessman ended; the powerless, little-man aspect engulfs whatever heroic features might be thought up for him. The white collar people, it would seem, are not being heroized by the old middle class; indeed, they can only be heroized collectively, as they join unions or fight inflations or patiently live out their slow misery. As individuals, they are only insecure and tortured creatures, being pushed by forces or swallowed by movements that they do not understand, and that senators do not have to face. At the center of the picture is business bureaucracy with its trained managerial staff and its tamed white collar mass. And it is within these structures of monopoly that the bulk of the middle-class men and women must make their prearranged ways.

IV

Yet, all this does not mean that the spirit of the old competition is entirely dead. There still remains an area where a type of go-gettem has found nourishment. If the agents of this new competition are not exactly the stuff of old-fashioned heroes, that is only because the conditions that prevail are so different; their initiative is being put to a harder test.

Against the unheroic backdrop of big business and the white collar mass, within and between the bureaucratic patterns of success, a new type of entrepreneur has arisen. In contrast to the classic little businessman, who operated in a world opening up like a row of

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oysters under steam, the new entrepreneur must operate in a world in which all the pearls have already been grabbed up and are carefully guarded.

The only manner by which the new entrepreneur can express his initiative is by servicing the powers that be, in the hope of getting his cut. And he serves them by "fixing things," between one big business and another, between big business and government, and between business as a whole and the public. He gets ahead because men in power do not expect that things can be done legitimately, because these men know fear, because their spheres of operation are broader than their capacities to observe, and because they are personally not very bright.

As a competitor, the new entrepreneur is an agent of the bureaucracies he serves, and what he competes for is the good will and favor of those who run the business system. His chance exists because there are several of these bureaucracies, private and public, having complicated entanglements with one another and with the public. Unlike the little white collar man, he does not often stay within any one corporate bureaucracy; his path zig-zags within and between bureaucracies, and he has made a well-worn path between big business and the regulatory agencies of the federal government.

He is a live wire, full of American know-how, and if he does not invest capital, his success is all the greater measure of his inherent worth, for this means that he is genuinely creative. Like the more heroic businessmen of old, he manages to get something for very little or nothing.

The new entrepreneur is very much at home in the "business services," in which bracket fall the commercial researcher and the public relations man, the advertising agencies, the labor relations expert, and the mass communication and entertainment industries. For the bright, young, educated man, these fields offer limitless opportunities, if he only has the initiative and the know-how, and if only the anxieties of the bureaucratic chieftains hold up.

The power of the old captain of industry rested, it is said, upon his engineering ability and upon his financial sharp dealing. The power of the present-day chieftain rests upon his control of the wealth piled up by the old captain and increased by a rational system of guaranteed tributes. The power of the new entrepreneur rests upon his personality and upon his skill in using it to manipulate the anxieties of the chieftain.

Now the concentration of power has modified the character and

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the larger meaning of competition. The competition in which these new entrepreneurs engage is not so much a competition for markets of commodities or services: it is a bright, anxious competition for the good will of the chieftain by means of personality. The "supply and demand" of the impersonal market does not decide the success or failure of the new entrepreneur; his success is decided by the personal decisions of intimately known chieftains of monopoly.

The new entrepreneur has this in common with the ordinary white collar worker: the careers of both are administered by powerful others. The difference is that the toadying of the white collar employee is small scale and unimaginative; he makes up the stable corps of the bureaucracy, and initiative is regimented out of his life. The new ulcered entrepreneur, running like Sammy, operates on the duplicious edges of the several bureaucracies. He comes to the immediate attention of the men who make the big decisions as he services their fears and eagerly encourages their anxious whims.

Part of the frenzy of the new entrepreneur is due to the fact that in his life there are no objective criteria of success. For such types, the last criteria are the indefinite good will of the chieftains and the shifting symbols of status. Part of his frenzy may also be due to his apprehension that his function may disappear. For many of the jobs he has been doing for the chieftains are now a standardized part of business enterprise and no longer require the entrepreneurial flair, but can be performed by the cheaper and more dependable white collar man. Besides, the new entrepreneur, with his lavish expense account, sometimes gets into the public eye as a fixer—along with the respectable businessman whose work he does—and even as an upstart and a crook. The same publics that idolize initiative become incensed when they find a grand model of success based, quite purely, upon it.

We may view the true scene of the new entrepreneur's operation as the personality market. Like the commodity market before it, the top levels of this market may well become an object to be administered rather than a play of free forces driven by crafty wile and unexampled initiative. Indeed, the new shape competition may take in this last remaining competitive market can already be seen. Its human meaning is displayed lower down the hierarchy, where bureaucratized business meets the public.

V

At this intersection, personality markets of a more stabilized sort have arised. Three immediate conditions are needed: First, an em-

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ployee must be part of a bureaucratic enterprise, in which his work is supervised by an authority over him. Second, it must be his regular business to contact a public from within this bureaucracy; he is thus the bearer of the firm's good name before anyone who cares to show up. Third, the public which he contacts must be anonymous, a mass of urban strangers.

One of the biggest of the several personality markets that may be isolated for study involves the salesperson in the metropolitan department store. Unlike the small independent merchant, the salesperson cannot haggle over prices. Prices are fixed by other employees of the bureaucracy. She cannot form her character by buying cheaply and selling wisely. Experts fix the market price; specialists buy the commodities which she is to sell. She cannot form her character by the promotional calculations and self-management of the classic heroes of liberalism or of the new entrepreneurs. There is only one area of her occupational life in which she is "free to act." That is the area of her own personality. She must make of her personality an alert, obsequious instrument whereby goods are distributed.

The white collar worker, like the wage worker in a modern factory, is alienated from the tools and products of her labor; indeed, she does not even mix labor with raw stuff to produce things. The white collar worker on a personality market must not only sell her time and energy; she must also "sell herself." In the normal course of her work, she becomes self-alienated. For, in the personality market, the personality itself, along with advertising, becomes the instrument of an alien purpose.

If there are not too many plant psychologists or personnel experts around, the factory worker is free to frown as he works. But not so the white collar employee. She must put her personality into it. She must smile when it is the time to smile. An interviewer, working in the biggest store in the world, recently observed of one of her experienced sales colleagues: "I have been watching her for three days now. She wears a fixed smile on her made-up face, and it never varies, no matter to whom she speaks. I never heard her laugh spontaneously or naturally. Either she is frowning or her face is devoid of any expression. When a customer approaches she immediately assumes her hard, forced smile. It amazes me because although I know that the smiles of most salesgirls are unreal, I've never seen such calculation given to the timing of a smile. I myself tried to copy such an expression, but I am unable to keep such a smile on my face if it is not sincerely and genuinely motivated."

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In this market the human expressions are no longer expressions of private aspirations. For all the features of the character, especially the familial ones—the kindly gesture, tact, courtesy, the smile—now become expressions of the company's aspirations. They are the salaried mask of the individual, available by the week, designed to advance the competitive position of the store with the public. Year after year they are enforced by the store's bureaucratic discipline, including the "professional shopper" who reports to the personnel department. In due course, this life of alienation sets up its own traits in the personality, selected, constructed, and used as instruments in the competitive struggle of the employees within the store, and between the store and the consuming public. Such is the creative function of the new competition.

Yet the personality market, in one sense, is still subject to the old laws of supply and demand. When a "seller's market" exists and labor is hard to buy, the well-earned aggressions of the salespeople come out and jeopardize the good will of the buying public. When there is a "buyer's market" and jobs are hard to get, the salespeople must repress again and practice politeness. Thus the laws of supply and demand, as in an older epoch of capitalism, continue to regulate the intimate life-fate of the individual and the kind of personality that may be developed and displayed.

The old competition is dead, even if the old liberal alibis for it are now incarnate as fetishes. But new kinds of competition, making new kinds of people, have arisen.

Near the top of the new hierarchy are the new entrepreneurs, the bureaucratic fixers and the business experts; and at the bottom are the people on the personality markets. Somewhere in between, the little businessman struggles to gain the stable security of big business by having his tribute also guaranteed, and yet, in the *name* of competition, hoping somehow for the main chance.

Both of the newer types serve the bureaucracies, and both, in their own way, practice the creative art of selling. In a restricted market economy, salesmanship is truly praised as a creative act, but it is entirely too serious a matter to be trusted to mere creativity. The more alert chieftains are becoming aware of this. The really great opportunities for expropriation are in the field of the human personality itself. The fate of competition, and the character it will assume, depends upon the success or failure of the adventures of monopolists in this field.

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Poetry

BERCEUSE

Première-née — temps de l'oriole,
Première-née — le mil en fleurs,
Et tant de flûtes aux cuisines . . .
Mais le chagrin au coeur des Grands
Qui n'ont que filles à leur arc.

S'assembleront les gens de guerre,
Et tant de sciences aux terrasses . . .
Première-née, chagrin du peuple,
Les dieux murmurent aux citernes,
Se turent les femmes aux cuisines.

* * *

Gênait les prêtres et leurs filles,
Gênait les gens de chancellerie
Et les calculs de l'astronome:
Dérangerez-vous l'ordre et le rang?
Telle est l'erreur à corriger.

Du lait de Reine tôt sevrée,
Au lait d'euphorbe tôt vouée,
Ne ferez plus la moue des Grands
Sur le miel et sur le mil,
Sur la sébile des vivants.

L'ânier pleurait sous les lambris,
Oriole en main, cigale en l'autre:
Mes jolies cages, mes jolies cages,
Et l'eau de neige de mes outres,
Ah! pour qui donc, fille des Grands?

* * *

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BERCEUSE

Girl, first-born—oriole season,
First-born—the millet in bloom,
And sound of flutes in the kitchens . . .
But grief at the heart of the Great
Who have only girls to their bow.

There will be gathering of the war council,
And expounding of doctrine in the halls . . .
First-born, grief of the people,
The gods grumbled in the wells,
The women were hushed in the kitchens.

* * *

Disturbed the priests and their daughters,
Disturbed the council of ministers
And the astronomer's reckonings:
Will you confound order and rank?
This is the error to correct.

From Queen's milk soon weaned,
For euphorbia milk soon fated,
For you no more the pout of the Great
Over the honey and the millet,
Over the bowl of the living.

Bearing a cicada and an oriole,
Under the gilded ceiling the ass-driver wept:
For whom now, my pretty cages,
And the water of snow in my leathern bottles,
Ah! for whom now, daughter of the Great?

* * *

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Fut embaumée, fut lavée d'or,
Mise au tombeau dans les pierres noires;
En lieu d'agaves, de beau temps,
Avec ses cages à grillons
Et le soleil d'ennui des Rois.

S'en fut l'ânier, s'en vint le Roi!
Qu'on peigne la chambre d'un ton vif
Et la fleur mâle au front des Reines . . .
J'ai fait ce rêve, dit l'oriole,
D'un cent de reines en bas age.

Pleurez, l'ânier, chantez, l'oriole,
Les filles closes dans les jarres
Comme cigales dans le miel,
Les flûtes mortes aux cuisines
Et les sciences aux terrasses.

* * *

N'avait qu'un songe et qu'un chevreau,
— Fille et chevreau de même lait —
N'avait l'amour que d'une Vieille.
Ses caleçons d'or furent au Clergé,
Ses guimpes blanches a la Vieille . . .

Très vieille femme de balcon
Sur sa berceuse de rotin,
Et qui mourra de grand beau temps
Dans le faubourg d'argile verte . . .
Chantez, ô Rois, les fils à naître!

Aux salles blanches comme semoule
Le Scribe range ses pains de terre.
L'ordre reprend dans les grands Livres.
Pour l'oriole et le chevreau,
Voyez le Maître des cuisines.

ST.-J. PERSE

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Was embalmed, was washed in gold,
Laid in a tomb in the black rocks,
Where the agave grew, on a clear day,
With her cricket-cages
And the jaded sunlight of Kings.

The ass-driver is gone, the King is come!
Let them paint the bed-chamber bright
And the male flower on the forehead of Queens . . .
I have dreamed this, said the oriole,
Infant queens a hundredfold.

Weep, ass-driver, sing, oriole,
Girls sealed in jars
Like cicadas in honey,
The flutes stopped in the kitchens
And the expounding of doctrine in the halls.

* * *

Had only a dream and a young goat,
—Girl and kid of one milk—
Had love only of an Old Woman.
Her drawers of gold went to the clergy,
To the Old Woman her white shirts.

Very old woman on a balcony,
In her rattan rocking-chair,
And who will die on a fine clear day
In the district of green clay . . .
Sing, oh Kings, the sons to be born!

In the rooms white as semolina
The Scribe tidies his earthen loaves.
Order resumes in the great Books.
For the oriole and the kid
Inquire of the Chief Cook.

ST.-J. PERSE

(*Translated by Eleanor Clark*)

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THE LESSON FOR TODAY IS A CHAPTER ENTITLED NIGHT

Thickness of enthrall tempests me; those parachutes of words,
They are gala, foreshadow rich kingdoms, dreams are such.

Waking undoes the flesh,
And going grave into the morning abstracts us.
It is an anguish, our terminus in light,
Wholly a dead dimension of solitude
Reflecting an existence cloaked and powerless.

Magic-like I cast a hook to hearing.
My whole heart, its tithings, this fountain of eternals
Choirs my voice, my once sword of secrecy,
Away from threadbare, sun-splash, and dying tree
Of day.

An ebullience of oracle, bloodstreamed,
Gilded, and lodestone strong.
Is chimed and comely
And my words are laurel sisters to a dream.

I honeycomb no tears for night;
The beads of my mind's light pass thru a lens, my ear,
And my intent is as genital as whales.

Grieving of all that Adam did undo
In savage intimacies,
I plunge into the dark fathoms of voice, my love,
And by my glitter hope to metaphor, with fanfare,
The day's body that is headstone cold.

ANTHONY HARRIGAN

MAN AND BOY: THE CRACKING GLASS

—"Look, look in your heart, believing boy,
what is this life looming against the mind
that now, half ignominy and half joy,
even now, with men retrenching on their kind,
can pull us upwards from the underground,
your ground and mine, with such a cracking sound?"

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—"Look in your vanity, O vivid man,
not in my grating heart. It is your eyes,
frosty with fallen dark and the great van
of the moon's light, which tell the noble lies
that rend us and praise rending as God's will.
Look in your pride; create the God you kill."

—"I cannot look into that glass and pray."
—"That cracking is my life, your truth, the way."

R. P. Blackmur

WAR

(*After Rimbaud*)

Where basilisk and mortar lob their lead
Whistling against the cloud sheep overhead,
Scarlet or green, before their black-tongued Sire,
The massed battalions flounder into fire
Until the furnace of affliction turns
A hundred thousand men to stone and burns
The poor dead in the summer grass. Their friend,
The earth, was low and thrifty to this end:
It is a god untouched by papal bulls,
The great gold chalice and the thuribles:
Cradled on its hosannahs, it will rock
Dead to the world, until their mother, fat
With weeping underneath her cracked black hat,
Hands it her penny knotted in a sock.

Robert Lowell

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Bernanos: The Priest As Scapegoat

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL

CERTAIN NOTIONS that I have entertained for a long time about the work of Georges Bernanos in particular were crystallised for me lately when I read the following in a paper by D. W. Winnicott and Clare Britton on *The Problem of Homeless Children*:

> Each child, according to the degree of his distrust, and according to the degree of his hopelessness about the loss of his own home (and sometimes his recognition of the inadequacy of that home while it lasted), is all the time testing the hostel staff as he would test his own parents. Sometimes he does this directly, but most of the time he is content to let another child do the testing for him. An important thing about this testing is that it is not something that can be achieved and done with. Always somebody has to be a nuisance. Often one of the staff will say: 'We'd be all right if it weren't for Tommy . . .,' but in point of fact the others can only afford to be 'all right' because Tommy is being a nuisance, and is proving to them that the home can stand up to Tommy's testing, and could therefore presumably stand up to their own.

It is curious how the psychological emphasis has shifted off 'repression' since the war. The feeling of insecurity and a lack of childhood discipline are now regarded as the chief source of our ills. If Dr. Winnicott were an army psychiatrist or any kind of official spokesman, I might be suspicious of his emphasis on 'discipline.' But I happen to know him for a peculiarly disinterested man with no axe to grind. Not even an anti-Freudian axe. For all the separate conclusions to which his extensive field-work in peace-time and war-time has brought him, Dr. Winnicott still regards himself as a Freudian and officiates for the British Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

His general view is that a child requires to have its original feeling of infinity closely delimited and its life confined within a circle. If the laws established by a child's parents prove unreliable, if the child can break them with impunity, the feeling of infinity becomes an abyss of nothingness and sets up acute distress and indeed

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despair in the child. He looks elsewhere for his circle of authority and tests the law personified by his teachers and later by the police. 'The young delinquent,' says Dr. Winnicott in another paper on *Delinquency Research,* 'values and loves the policeman.' And he points out that

> The thief's inability to keep and enjoy what is stolen is well known. The boy who steals apples from an orchard and who eats the apples himself is not ill, is not a delinquent. He is just greedy, and his greed is relatively conscious. The anti-social child steals apples and either wastes them or gives them away. Intermediate is the boy who eats them and is sick, the sickness being a bodily form of feeling guilty.

I am afraid that these considerations may seem a little remote from the subject proposed in the title of this essay. I offer them in elucidation of the first statement I have taken from Dr. Winnicott. This is entirely germane to my purpose.

What I had been thinking about Bernanos was that all the priests who are central characters in his novels are employed as scapegoats in a quite primitive, magical sense. Then I began to compare Bernanos with other Catholic writers and with non-Catholic writers, and after a while it began to seem to me that all the key characters in fiction were scapegoats in one sense or another. Indeed, I began to wonder whether the whole of our narrative and dramatic literature were not a concerted effort to find and employ scapegoats.

I fancied that somewhere there must exist a heavy thesis by a German professor in which all this is set forth, but I have been unable to find it. Instead, I found 'Tommy' in Dr. Winnicott's Oxfordshire hostel, a link between primitive ritual and sophisticated literature, and I felt that the argument had already become a great deal less far-fetched. I opened *The Golden Bough* with an easy mind. The original scapegoat was Jewish.

> On the Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, the Jewish high-priest laid both his hands on the head of a live goat, confessed over it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel, and, having thereby transferred the sins of the people to the beast, sent it away into the wilderness.

Frazer is full of the most enchanting details of the use of animal and inanimate creatures for the private and communal expulsion of sin or sickness among the peoples of every part of the world, but of course a human scapegoat is the most efficient.

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> The devices to which the cunning and selfish savage resorts for the sake of easing himself at the expense of his neighbour are manifold.

It is uncertain to what extent Frazer ever realised that 'the cunning and selfish savage' is ubiquitous and eternal. He never let on. He was a wise man and quietly finished his work. The dig at religious mythology was comparatively safe.

> The accumulated misfortune and sins of the whole people are sometimes laid upon the dying god, who is supposed to bear them away for ever, leaving the people innocent and happy.

But I must not go on quoting from *The Golden Bough*. It is probably accessible to every reader of these pages. Before I move to literary territory, I would like simply to point out that a journalistic misuse of the word 'scapegoat' is widely current to-day and that it is no part of the word's original sense to imply blame. To-day we have lost the sense of our own guilt. It is always 'they' and never 'we' who have sinned. In this respect we have fallen below the moral and indeed the psychological level of 'the cunning and selfish savage'! Anti-Semitism and Vansittartism do not properly employ Jews or Germans as scapegoats. They impute sin to the victim and name it as the cause of the people's misfortunes. The function of a true scapegoat is beneficial, and scapegoats are to be loved.

The night a new priest arrives in the village, a man is murdered The new priest, sensitive, pale and mysteriously ill, turns out in the end to be a girl. The murdered man was the expected priest. The girl commits suicide after a confession. Lesbian practices lay at the root of her disorder. In other words, she had broken a very serious *tabu*. The priest paid the price of her guilt and unhappiness. After masquerading as a priest and thus taking his function to herself, she also must die. That is the plot of *Un Crime*, the earliest, least sophisticated and perhaps even least mythological of Bernanos' novels and the only one in which the subject-matter is explicitly that of a thriller. However, no novel by Bernanos is without a body.

Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune is not a work of fiction and does not concern us here. The work of Georges Bernanos divides cleanly into two parts, the fiction (whose theme is constant and obsessive) and the polemics. *Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune* is a protest against the massacres perpetrated by Franco's men in Majorca.

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By it, Bernanos gained a great deal of credit among non-Catholics during the Spanish Civil War.

In the *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne,* a young priest already sick dies at his post. He dies for and from the sins of his village. These sins drain away through him, and in the end he chokes up (his only other food is dry bread and sour wine). The sin which finishes him off is the sin of excessive love of the creature on the part of the *chatelaine.* In terms of primitive *tabu,* this was a form of lingering incest wish. The young priest brings it to light and subjugates it in the manner of a psycho-analyst with a gift for the theatre (but the scene is also reminiscent of a medieval conjuration of demons), and that is the end of him. His cancer proliferates at an unheard-of rate, and he dies.

L'Imposteur and its sequel *La Joie* concern a priest who has lost his faith. He is presented rather unsympathetically, but it is implied that contemporary city life (he functions in Paris) has choked his channels of grace. He is in fact an inefficient scapegoat. Full of his own sins, how can he absorb the sins of others? The fact that he is a city priest is already symptomatic. To go to a remote village is a stage on the journey to the wilderness. This priest is refusing to take that journey. In Paris, an old man dies because of the priest's inability to bring down help from God or, contrariwise, to draw away the old man's sins. Then the priest leaves Paris for a remote village, but lives obstinately at the *chateau.* Here, in *La Joie,* he exerts a remoter influence upon a young, beautiful and well-born girl who is in an acute state of grace. The connection is not stated, but it appears to the imagination to be in some way as a result of this influence that the girl is presently murdered by the Russian chauffeur who cannot endure the spectacle of so much God-given joy and who has observed the girl at her prayers. Perhaps it is that the girl herself must be the scapegoat because the priest cannot or will not. However, not only has the murder itself a distinctly erotic flavour, but the seeing the girl at prayer is also done in the style of Susannah and the Elders, as if prayer were a thing peculiarly not to be observed by members of the opposite sex.

Sous le Soleil de Satan presents a feminine type whose sin Bernanos looks upon with profound compassion and whose story he tells again in the *Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette,* where, however, expiation is secured by non-clerical means. Mouchette is the girl ill-treated at home who goes wrong at a tender age, normally with older men who are her social superiors.

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Again the connection is curiously inexplicit. But in some mysterious way the Mouchette of *Sous le Soleil de Satan* is redeemed by the struggles of a clumsy young priest both with his own stubborn (caprine?) soul and with an exterior devil who causes him to lose himself at night (in the wilderness?) and to walk round in circles. The young priest in *Sous le Soleil de Satan* flagellates and wears about his middle a rope so tight that it eats into his flesh.

Let us be quite frank and admit that an element of Bernanos' appeal to his reader is pornographic. Flagellation, transvestism, the seduction of fourteen-year-olds by middle-aged rakes, the sadistic murder of pure girls of good family by proletarian debauchees who are foreigners and peeping Toms into the bargain, . . . these are the familiar ingredients of rubber-shop literature, with or without the shutters of the confessional, the priestly robe, the candle-lit study and the clouds of incense.[1] Yet Bernanos is a serious and at times an exquisite artist. He is a superb rhetorician, a profound judge of motive, a man tender and generous (as only a Frenchman seems able to be) in his attitude to public affairs[2] and a considerable scholar. His narrative technique is possibly unequalled in our time. The prose is massive and simple in its weight, fluid and direct in its address. There is no other writer who could make a spasm of conscience last fifty pages and be neither dull nor unconvincing, nor yet fantastic and buzzing with conceits.

The type of Christian faith which M. Bernanos exemplifies is dignified, modest and quite free from either sensationism or hysteria. From his polemical writing, he must be judged to be a liberal moralist disinclined to debate points of theology with his religious superiors but of a resolute independence in his casuistry. He derives the man-

1. Let us also be scrupulously fair and admit that Bernanos is sparing of his incense. Perhaps no other Catholic writer has so little of it blowing about his pages. Indeed, he rarely takes us inside a church at all. The candle-lit study, hall and passages of the presbytery are his favourite *mise en scene*. It is also as well to point out that the appeal of pornography is by no means a superficial one. The evil of pornography is like the evil of public oratory and lies in the fact that it appeals too directly and with insufficient control to the deepest instincts, and this is the level attacked also by mythology.

2. What other Catholic came so well out of the Spanish affair? Only Maritain. At the same time, it should be noted that there was a rough division by orders. Where Jesuit influence prevailed (and this appeared to include the rank and file of secular priests), Franco's disgusting crusade was taken at its face value. On the whole, and notably in this country, the Dominicans and those whom they directed were more judicious.

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ner of his eloquence from Leon Bloy and Charles Peguy, but displays none of Bloy's private anguish, none of his highly colored, analogical and indeed allegorical theologising, and none of Peguy's affectations of a pre-Tridentine simplicity. The direct descendant of Bloy is Berdyaev, a Russian. The direct descendants of Peguy are Gill, Chesterton, Pepler, the bucolic, tankard-draining, hand-loom-weaving, one-acre-and-a-cow English Arcadians. In France itself, the Mendelian laws of intellectual descent operate with greater complexity, though from Peguy we derive J.O.C., the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique*. Like Bloy, Bernanos lives in the world and attacks *les bien-pensants,* but his fantasy has been chastened by Peguy. Like both, he is a French patriot. Unlike both, he shows no special predilection for the poor. So far as an infidel can judge, he stands in far less danger of excommunication than did either of his predecessors.

But a man gives away his predicament in dreams. In a body of work as cleanly divided as Bernanos', his fiction will represent the dream-life as T. S. Eliot's poetry does. A number of Eliot's prose doctrines are refuted in his verse, and much of Bernanos' rhetoric is given the lie by fictions produced when the censor was nodding and the will rampant.

The work of Georges Bernanos is at bottom primitive, pre-Christian. At the same time, its appeal is also post-Christian and not at all uncongenial to an audience conditioned by the theories of Freud and his successors. As music plays directly upon the rhythms of the heartbeat and the bowels, Bernanos, though he uses Christian stage-properties and Christian prestige, plays upon the most deeply flowing mass-impulses of mankind. Bernanos (in his fiction) is a witch-doctor. He is also a psycho-analyst for whom and for his patients primitive magic is still operative and primitive *tabus* still valid. The excitement attached to watching a girl pray is a marked instance. And always in the centre of the stage stands the figure of the scapegoat priest, on whom we load all our sins and send him out into the wilderness and who is the point at which primitive belief assumes the Christian paraphernalia.

There is a little recognised form of heresy or predisposition towards heresy which consists in taking the part for the whole or an attribute for the reality. All forms of idolatry indeed are in some sense identical with the erotic tendency known as fetishism. The heretic in such a case may never give overt expression to an heretical doctrine. He substitutes an ancillary for the central mystery and adores something other than incarnate God. It is not far from the truth to say

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that Bernanos adores the priestly function. Adores? At least he is obsessed with it, and the erotic analogy persists. The feeling changes with the object. The fetishist cannot be truly said to love the shoe or the fur-coat in the sense in which he ought to have loved its possessor.

Is it perhaps that for the intelligent, contemporary Catholic the priest is a figure he cannot accept? It must be obvious to an intelligent Catholic that priests are commonly stupid and that many of them mislead their flocks. Does he therefore wish to attach to them a primitive, magical and quasi-phallic significance in order to fit them into his world-picture at all? To working-class Protestants in provincial towns, the Catholic priest is at once a figure of ridicule and fear. I was brought up to believe that when a Catholic priest visits the house of one of his parishioners, he leaves his umbrella on the door-step as a sign that nobody, least all the husband, must enter. Also, Catholic girls were supposed to be particularly easy for a young man to persuade, doubtless because of some morally debilitating element in their religion.

Certainly, the rank-and-file, secular priest is the central figure in Catholicism, and certainly Catholic intellectuals are embarrassed by him. He must be either sentimentalized, deplored or haloed with primitive mystery. He is more popular with anti-clerical writers than with his co-religionists. The lecherous, tormented priests of Liam O'Flaherty, the bumbling idiots of Joyce, are more alive than anything in *croyant* literature. Leon Bloy ignored the parish priest, though he liked Trappists and Carthusians. Graham Greene has one book, *The Power and the Glory,* which I imagine to have been directly inspired by Bernanos. The priest here is placed in a country which Greene visited, hated and failed to understand, and he is a bibulous fellow of weak character but an efficient scapegoat. Otherwise, Greene ignores all priests, secular and cloistered. His liveliest cleric is an unfrocked Anglican.

In Greene's novels, the plumbing system of grace is in full flow, but the scapegoats are laymen, preferably criminals and almost certainly lapsed Catholics. But the machinery of fear is altogether more elaborate and sophisticated in Greene. Fear itself is his obsession, fear his theme. In *Brighton Rock,* which has been commonly regarded as Greene's masterpiece, it is explicitly stated that the forces of good and evil must be felt with maximum impact and that a bad Catholic is superior to a good pagan for this reason. In other words, faith increases the *frisson.* The chief argument for belief is that, if you do not believe, you cannot be damned.

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Tommy can be truly said to misbehave himself on behalf of the other children. From the children's point of view, he is a true scapegoat. 'The others can only afford to be "all right" because Tommy is being a nuisance.' But the children are not the whole community. There are always the members of the staff who say, 'We'd be all right if it weren't for Tommy.' The wilderness into which the other children send Tommy is the wilderness of adult disapproval, and unfortunately the wilderness in this case has a point of view of its own. To the child community, Tommy is a scapegoat. To the adult community, he is a young criminal.

It is probable that there must always be a similar ambiguity in the role of scapegoat in a highly developed and complex society. I have already remarked on the journalistic misuse of 'scapegoat' to mean 'those on whom one lays the blame.' The Jews for the anti-Semite, the Germans for Lord Vansittart, the war itself for the man in the street, the *bourgeoisie* for orthodox communists, the machine for the Arcadians . . . are all fulfilling some of the functions of a true scapegoat, but the fact is unrecognised by those who employ them. The scapegoat's function, of which all men feel the need, has receded into unconsciousness, and 'the cunning and selfish savage' of the twentieth century has succumbed to the final indignity of hating the useful saviour-beast on whom he lays the burden of his sins.

On the other hand, a class of scapegoats who formerly met with unmitigated disapproval have in the modern world received something like adulation from certain groups in society. Now here we have a situation like that in Dr. Winnicott's hostel. The criminal of the gangster films is 'Tommy.' Who are 'the other children'? Can it be that they are the orphans of industrial capitalism, the working classes and the dispossessed in general? As a matter of demonstrable fact, they are. The upper and middle-classes do not read *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. They read Edgar Wallace or the academic thriller, in which the police or the private detective are the heroes.

It is evident that the German professor who writes that heavy thesis will have to be a Marxist. To-day is not the only heyday of the property criminals. We remember Villon and other *poètes maudits*. The greatest popular hero this country ever had was a property criminal, Robin Hood, who retired to the wilderness of Sherwood Forest. The type of mild and amiable scapegoat hero in a more settled age was Robinson Crusoe.

But these are impure types. The criminal scapegoat, the scapegoat hero and another, the scapegoat-fool . . . are the only consider-

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able mythological figures so far employed in Hollywood. The fool has his own history. Mr. Polly was the type of many scape-goat-fools in the English novel, Rip van Winkle in the American. Both were inferior to Chaplin on the screen. The Germans may be said to have created the scapegoat leader or in other words to have formed themselves up in a column with the goat at their head and all marched into the desert together.

This is in fact the only method by which a scapegoat may be employed for revolutionary purposes. To have an efficient scapegoat makes for contentment and good behaviour. From their own point of view, our rulers do well to encourage the proletarian adulation of gangsters on the films, if not indeed to allow a substantial criminal class to flourish within the social framework on the American pattern. The members of the hostel staff will no doubt bear this in mind.

A final point of mythological interest. The human scapegoats of the ancient world, although frequently the representation of God, were invariably chosen for some physical peculiarity, deformity or condition of sickness. Moreover, to give them a positive, fertilizing function in addition to their primary task in the expulsion of evil, they were in some communities chastised upon the genital organs 'with squills and branches of the wild fig.' Contemporary creators of literary scapegoats have unconsciously returned with increasing clarity to these original types.

Especially has the criminal scapegoat tended of late towards abnormality. Graham Greene's simplest exemplar, the killer in *A Gun for Sale,* has a hare-lip of which he is constantly and bitterly conscious. In the film, in which Alan Ladd plays the part, this lip is changed for a wrist deformed by the killer's mother with a flat-iron. Popeye in William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Slim in *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* are both impotent. Popeye avails himself of a common fertility symbol, the corn-cob. The boy in *Brighton Rock* is not impotent, but he experiences great difficulty. He is a creature of markedly low physique.

The Bernanos priests are at once ill, of stubborn conscience and socially inept or marked out to be outcasts. The good ones are untrained, country youths whose scrupulosity tortures them very nearly to the point of madness. There is also a peculiar fitness in the priest's black robe.

If we take the view that human society ought to develop in the direction of greater individual responsibility, we shall of course de-

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plore all scapegoats and (with Frazer) regard their history as 'an endless number of very unamiable devices for palming off upon some one else the trouble which a man shrinks from bearing himself.' But if we are in favor of the natural man or if we despair of exterminating in ourselves 'the cunning, selfish savage' and the homeless child, yet it is still clearly preferable that scapegoats should be volunteers, as they frequently were in the ancient world and as they are at the New Year festival in Lhasa to-day. In this respect, M. Bernanos exhibits a fine willingness. The degree of his self-identification with his victims is unusual. Many people in this country believed that *The Diary of a Country Priest* was a true diary and, although we are unused to priests with moustaches, that the person on the jacket wrapped in a great muffler and with burning, phthisic eyes was the dying priest himself. It is he in fact, the author, who will take away your sins. It may be observed, however, that, in making this offer, M. Bernanos is doing no more than his duty as an intellectual to-day. For, despite the long and distinguished succession of *poètes maudits,* there never was an age in which of itself the possession of exceptional gifts of intelligence or sensibility so qualified a man for employment in the vicarious expulsion of evils.

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TWO DRAWINGS BY KURT SELIGMAN—*Daedalus* (above) and *Perseus*

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Notes on the Working Day

WALLACE MARKFIELD

He sat carefully now in the Mall, unwrapping his sandwiches, chewing casually. Clenching the paper into a greasy ball he smiled and threw it at a pigeon that flat-hopped a few feet from his bench. The pigeon lurched into the air, came down to arch its breast. He looked up at the clock and saw that ten minutes were gone already. Fifty minutes he could count now to establish himself as an individual, to realize once again that a year ago he had been in college. Even on the campus, in the clear, precise words of his instructors, over the packed drawers of the library catalogues the dead whale-mass of the working day had threatened him.

Deep in his consciousness was the memory of all the proletarian novels and stories he had read, where little shop girls come to spend their lunch hours in the Square, tired and pale under the sun that ignores them, where war and death pass unnoticed over its cold face. He remembered the heroes who died here, with their smashed bodies crying bloody messages for the last chapter.

Once he had sat in the Square, in the years of hate, swelling powerfully and righteously, but now he faced the sun over the city. One day its rays would come too clearly for him, and there would be the sound of each building gasping its brick hoarseness and collapsing into the street, where all those who had forgotten the sun waited for the warmth, for the period when each pavement and each brick would enclose them with hot atom-fire.

Grasping the back of the bench he stiffened, breathed quickly. It was too easy. Someday the crowds here would be silent. It would be the day when no sun came down, when in the center of the Mall the great flesh-mass would be placed. Like the ending of *Jews Without Money* would they stand, listening to the speaker who promised them. . . . What? No great march on the City Hall for them, or a red dawn, or a new savior.

The crowd that warmed their muscles, that thrust their loins into one another would be promised death. All around them, from the

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high windows where no faces broke the sheen of the glass, machine-gun muzzles would appear and open fire like the threat of a child's wooden stick. The crowd would unfold, grasp at the bullets that defied all touch, shriek pagan rituals as they died.

But he knew there was no need for him to think of this on his lunch hour. Death lay in wait for him every moment of the working day, ticking away with each second, sending out its own music that grew clearer and louder with every dull punch against the time-card. He rose and walked over to the statue, where he stood on the outskirts of the group, listening to the Jews as they made strange secret sounds. Without finishing sentences they circled one another.

Two of them stood in the center, gesturing at each other, almost holding the discussion tenderly in their cupped palms. He marveled at one of them, the one nearest him, for he had thought that the species had died with his father. This one was also bald, and he watched the hanging flesh of the belly distort the image of the powerful legs. He could never again know of these men with their bellies, how they could work in the heat, take the subways home, and sit after supper to read the Yiddish paper. These, he thought, these are the true symbol of the United Nations. Age comes into their bellies as it comes to an Irish laborer, baldness tears their hair as it does to the good men of the Protestant staunchness, thoughts over the sewing and the cutting and the packing machines press and bubble for release, and at night they come out in the mighty scream of the universal death-wish.

"Dreck you give me," the hanging belly screamed as he turned to the crowd. "What do you tell me about this war? A bargain this war!"

"Don't scream at me," the other replied, "and keep your mouth clean. You're alive, no? You horse's ass what you are, maybe they put you in a sealed train? Maybe they raped your wife and your daughter and made you dig your own grave? Maybe they burned you into little ashes and made soap out of you?"

He waited for the other to reply, watching the man carefully, seeing the face that was the face of his father. He must answer well, this one, for he came from out the tunnels and the labyrinths of history. He was the collective voice and shifting eyes of those that move from nation to nation in the night. Splitting into fragmentary particles they lose their consciousness and crawl toward the cold bricks of the city, searching for the lost temple. High over the city, he wanted to say, far beyond your lost sight stands the giant form of King Kong,

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the monster who walks with you in the streets, who speaks only through shadow-life.

Die, Jew, die, but not in the lunch-hour sun!

And fat-belly nodded his head in quick little jerks. "Sure, who stops you from living here? Go on, live, be happy, slave over the machine, go ahead! They take your son and they give him a gun, and they promise you a world made out of honey. Sure, let them promise you all the honey they have, but it stinks from the same dreck." And fat-belly sat down violently on the stone step of the statue.

He walked back to the bench, looked up at the clock and saw that only twenty minutes were left him. Walking over to a little push-cart that rested in the gutter between two trees, he bought a bar of plain milk chocolate. Holding it in his hand made him realize that the war was over. Slowly and easily it had passed, like silence into terror, till now the culmination came, and he tore the wrapper off. Fat-belly walked by, and he watched his lowered head, with the arms bouncing up and down against the wide hips.

His tongue passed lovingly over the chocolate. There goes Everyman, Here Comes Everybody, the H.C.E. of our culture-lag. Back to the shop he goes, the man with my father's face. And soon he'll be a mass of ulcerated liver, of cancerous intestine, of enlarged prostate glands, putting aside his cloth to run to the bathroom, buttoning himself as he flushes his life away.

The last of the chocolate he chewed quickly. It left his mouth clogged and dry. He went to the public fountain and drank greedily. The water loaded his stomach, and he felt full, squeezed in more tightly to the center of things. Fat-belly, you spoke of dreck, that most pungent of odorous things. It is the basis of your life, fat-belly, for it is not your fate to return in death and decomposition to the sweet-grassed earth. You are a Jew, and it is to dreck, your primordal element that you return.

Ride the subway back to the bed and the dream. Return to your great myth-heroes, old men with potent, finger-twisted beards, stand with them as they tremble before the sneer of Torquemada, jiggle the belly as you dance naked in flames. Leopold Bloom of the garment center, will fear leave you in the morning with the catharsis of the sun?

Or would it be the race with time, as it came to him each day? Between and beyond two wars, Leopold fat-belly Bloom, but this is the end for you. Perhaps it would come in bed, where all knowledge resides, like the last torturous turn with your wife that ends in choking impotence. Perhaps it would come at the end of a working day, when

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the machine would be turned down for one moment to catch the slow whistle and the long sound.

The slow whistle and the long sound. The clock gave him five more minutes, yet he knew that this dream of death would be with him always, carefully plotted out, stamped within him like an economist's chart, rising higher and higher each day, yet never touching the heights of marginal utility. He crossed the street and began to walk back to the building. He passed the subway entrance, and he saw several boys and girls emerge, carrying college textbooks under their arms. He wanted to link his fingers with theirs, grip hard, till he lost touch with his own flesh, run down the streets, past the avenues and the buses, sing the songs he had once known with them, tell them the books to be read yet, but warn them, warn them to run quickly down the streets and the avenues, past the tower where time sneered at him. As they turned the corner he wanted to run after them, and give warning that their laughter might end in one hot note of cinder.

He breathed quickly and deeply as the elevator doors opened, for he knew that the laughter waited for him somewhere in the streets of the city. He knew that he must run, naked, as in a dream, to clasp it.

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Cezanne's Doubt

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

He needed one hundred sessions of work for one still life, one hundred and fifty sittings for a portrait. What we call his work was for him only a series of attempts towards the completed work. He wrote in September, 1906, he was then sixty-seven and within a month of his death: I "am in such a state of mental upheaval, under a tension so great, that I am afraid at times of losing what feeble hold I have on my reason. Now it seems to me that I am working better and that I am beginning to find myself in my studies. Will I arrive at the remote goal I have so long pursued? I study constantly from nature and it seems to me that I am making slow progress." Painting was his world and his way of existence. He worked alone, without pupils, without the admiration of his family or the encouragement of juries. He painted on the afternoon his mother died. In 1870 he was painting at Estaque while the police sought him for dodging conscription. And yet he came to have doubts about this vocation. As he grew old he wondered if the originality of his painting did not come from a visual defect, if his entire life had not been based on a physical accident. The uncertainties and abuse of his contemporaries echoed this strain and doubt. "The painting of a drunken scavenger," said a critic in 1905. Today C. Mauclair brings forth once more as an argument against him Cezanne's own confessions of lack of ability. Meanwhile his pictures are known all over the world. Why so much uncertainty, so much labor, so many restraints, then suddenly the greatest success?

Zola, a friend of Cezanne from childhood, was the first to find genius in him, and the first to speak of him as "genius miscarried." Anyone looking at the life of Cezanne, as did Zola, with more attention to the character of the man than to the meaning of his painting, could very well treat it as an unhealthy manifestation.

For from the time of his entrance in the College Bourbon at Aix in 1852 he disquieted his friends by his periods of anger and depression. Seven years later, having decided to become a painter, he

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doubted his own talent and did not dare to ask his father, a former hatter who was then a banker, to send him to Paris. Zola in his letters reproaches him for instability, weakness and indecision. He comes to Paris but writes: "I have done nothing but change my habitation and boredom has followed me." He tolerated no discussion because it tired him, and he could never explain his reasons. The keynote of his character was anxiety. At forty-two, thinking that he would die young, he made his will. At forty-six, for a period of six months he suffered an intense, overwhelming agony of the spirit, of which he never spoke and the outcome of which is not known. At fifty-one he withdrew to Aix to find there the natural surroundings best suited to his genius, but it was also a retirement to the scene of his childhood, his mother and his sister. The death of the mother was a blow to the son. "Life is terrifying," he often said. Religion, which he then began to practice, began for him with the fear of life and the fear of death. "It's fear," he explains to a friend; "I feel I've got only four days more on earth; then afterwards? I believe I will survive after death and I don't want to risk roasting *in aeternum*." Although it later became deeper, the initial motive of his religion was the need to fix his life and to resign it. He becomes constantly more timid, suspicious and irritable. He comes to Paris sometimes, but, when he runs into friends, nods from a distance without addressing them. In 1903, when his pictures begin to sell in Paris for twice as much as those of Monet, when young people like Joachim Gasquet and Emile Bernard come to see him and ask questions, he expands a little. But the rancors persist. A child in Aix, passing nearby, had once bumped against him; from then on he had been unable to endure physical contact. On one occasion during his last years, he tripped and Emile Bernard supported him with his arm. Cezanne flew into a terrible rage. He was heard pacing his studio crying that he would not allow anyone to get their "hooks" into him. Again, because of their "hooks" he kept out of his studio women who could have served him as models; out of his life priests, whom he called "sticky"; he kept out of his life and out of his mind the theories of Emile Bernard when they became too insistent.

This loss of easy contacts with men, this inability to meet new situations, this flight into habits and an environment which present no problems; this stiffnecked opposition of theory to practice, of "hooks" to independent isolation—all these symptoms speak of a morbid disposition, and, as has been said of El Greco, of schizoid tendencies. The idea of painting based "on nature" in Cezanne came

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from the same weakness. His extreme attention to nature, to color, the inhuman character of his painting (he said that a face should be painted as an object), were only compensation; that is, his devotion to the visible world was a flight from the human world, a transference of his humanity. These conjectures do not give the positive meaning of his work; we cannot conclude without pursuing the matter further that his painting is a phenomenon of decadence, and, as Nietzsche says, of an "impoverished" life, or, further, that it has no lesson for the cultivated man. It is probably because they gave too great a place to psychology, to their personal knowledge of Cezanne, that Zola and Emile Bernard believed him a failure. The possibility remains that, by reason of his nervous weaknesses, Cezanne conceived a form of art valid for all. Left to himself, he was able to look at nature as, alone, a man can. The meaning of his work cannot be determined from his life.

Nor could he be better understood through the history of art; that is, by referring to the influences (of the Italians and of Tintoretto, of Delacroix, of Courbet and the Impressionists) on his methods, or even to his own testimony about his painting.

His early works, around the year 1870, were painted dreams, an Abduction, a Murder. They arise from feelings, and aim primarily to arouse feelings. They are almost always painted with bold strokes and give the moral physiognomy of movements rather than their visible aspect. It is to the Impressionists, and in particular to Pissarro, that Cezanne owes his subsequent conception of painting, not as the precise study of appearances, less a work of the studio than one of nature, and his abandonment of baroque methods, which seek *primarily* to render movement, for the small juxtaposed strokes and patient cross-hatchings.

But he soon broke away from the Impressionists. Impressionism was attempting to reproduce in painting the effect objects have as they strike the eye or attack the senses. It represents them in the atmosphere where we perceive them instantaneously, with absolute shapes, bound to each other by light and air. To render this enveloping luminosity, it is necessary to exclude the earth colors, and ochres, blacks, and to use only the seven colors of the prism. To represent the color of objects it is not enough to record on the canvas their local hue, that is the color which they have when they are isolated from surrounding objects, it is necessary to take into account the contrasting phenomena which modify local hues in nature. Moreover, every

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color we see in nature induces by a kind of rebound, the vision of the complementary color, and these complementaries reinforce each other to obtain in the picture, which will be seen in the dim light of indoors, the exact effect of colors in sunlight; it is necessary, then, to suggest to the imagination not only a green, if it is a question of grass, but also the complementary red which will make it vibrate. Finally, the local hue itself is broken up by the Impressionists. In general, every color can be obtained by juxtaposing, instead of mixing, the component colors, with a very vibrant tone resulting. Through these methods the canvas, which no longer corresponds to nature point by point, restores, by the interaction of its parts, the general truth of the impression.

But both the painting of the atmosphere and the division of hues drown the object and take away from it its peculiar heaviness. From the composition of Cezanne's pallet we may presume he had a different aim : there are, not the seven colors of the prism, but 18 colors; 6 reds, 5 yellows, 3 blues, 3 greens, 1 black. The use of warm colors and of black show that Cezanne wishes to represent the object, to rediscover it behind the atmosphere. At the same time he renounces the division of hue and replaces it by graduated mixtures, by an unfolding of chromatic shadows on the object, by a color modulation which follows the form and the light received by the object. The suppression of precise contours in certain instances, the fact that color dominates the pattern, certainly do not have the same meaning in Cezanne as they do in Impressionism. The object is no longer obscured by reflections, lost in its relations with the air and with other objects; it is as though a secret light glowed within it, light emanates from it, and there results an impression of solidity and matter. Nevertheless Cezanne does not renounce making the warm colors vibrate; he gets this color sensation in his use of blue.

We must say, then, that he wanted to return to the object without giving up the impressionist theory of art, which takes nature as its model. Emile Bernard reminded him that a picture, in the classic sense, exacted limitations through its contours, its composition and the distribution of lights. Cezanne answered: "They are making a picture and we are attempting a piece of nature." He said of the masters that they "replace reality with the imagination and with the abstraction which accompanies imagination,"—and of nature that "one must submit to this perfect work, from it everything comes to us, through it we exist, let us forget the rest." He states that he wanted to make of impressionism "something solid like the art of museums."

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His painting would be a paradox: to seek reality again without quitting sensation, without taking any other guide than nature as immediately perceived, without outlining the contours, without enclosing the color within the design, without "composing" either perspective or "picture." It is here that Bernard finds what he calls the suicide of Cezanne: he saw reality and forbade himself the means to attain it. Here might be found the cause of his difficulties and of the deformations found especially in his work between 1870 and 1900. The plates and fruit dishes placed in profile on a table ought to be ellipses, but the two ends of the ellipse are clumsy and out of proportion. The work table in the portrait of Gustave sprawls over the lower part of the picture against the laws of perspective. By abandoning design, Cezanne would have delivered himself to the chaos of sensations. But the sensations would make the objects run wild and would constantly suggest illusions, as they sometimes do—for example, the illusion of a movement of objects when we move our heads—if judgment did not unceasingly set appearances right. Cezanne would have, says Bernard, engulfed "painting in ignorance and his mind in darkness."

In reality, we can so judge his painting only by dropping half of what he said and closing our eyes to what he actually painted.

In his conversations with Emile Bernard, it is evident that Cezanne always seeks to avoid the ready-made alternatives proposed to him: of the senses or the intelligence, of painting which sees and painting which thinks, of nature and composition, of primitivism and tradition. "An illusion must be created," he says, but "I understand by illusion a logical vision, that is to say, a vision without anything of the absurd." "Is it a question of our nature?" asks Bernard. Cezanne answers: "It is a question of the two."—"Are not nature and art different?"—"I would like to unite them. Art is a personal apperception. I place that apperception within the sensation and I demand of the intelligence that it organize it into a work." But even these formulas are far too much related to current notions of "sensibility" or "sensation," and of "intelligence"; that is why Cezanne was unable to convince and preferred to paint.

Instead of applying to his work dichotomies which, moreover, belong more to the traditions of a school rather than to the founders—whether they be philosophers or painters—of these traditions, it would be better to be receptive to the peculiar meaning of his painting, which puts these dichotomies in question. Cezanne did not believe that he had to choose between sensation and thought, as between chaos and

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order. He does not wish to separate the fixed things appearing before our glance from the fugitive manner of their appearance; he wishes to paint matter in the process of acquiring form, order being born by spontaneous organization. He sets no gap between "the senses" and "the intelligence," but between the spontaneous order of perceived things and the human order of ideas and science. We perceive things in relation to them, we are anchored in them and it is on this base of "nature" that we construct sciences. It is this primordial world that Cezanne wished to paint, and that is why his pictures give the impression of nature at its origin, while photographs of the same landscapes suggest the works of men, their commodities, their imminent presence. Cezanne never wished to "paint like a brute," but to restore intelligence, ideas, the sciences, perspective, tradition, to contact with the natural world that they are destined to understand; to confront, as he puts it, the sciences, "which have left it," with nature.

Cezanne's researches in perspective discover by their fidelity to phenomena what later psychology was to formulate. Perspective as experienced, the perspective of our perception, is not geometric or photographic perspective: in perspective, near objects appear smaller, distant objects greater, which is not the case in a photograph, as can be seen in the movies when a train approaches and becomes larger much more quickly than a real train in the same conditions. To say that a circle seen obliquely is seen as an ellipse is to substitute for actual perception the schema of what we would see if we were a photographic apparatus: in fact, we see a form which oscillates around the ellipses without *being* an ellipse. In a portrait of Mme. Cezanne, the border of tapestry on both sides of the body does not make a straight line; but we know that if a line passes under a large band of paper, the two visible segments appear dislocated. Gustave Geffroy's table spreads out at the base of the picture; but when our eye traverses a broad surface, the images it obtains bit by bit are taken from different points of view and the total surface is warped. It is true that by bringing these deformations onto the canvas I freeze them, I arrest the spontaneous movement by which they are heaped one upon the other in perception and tend towards geometric perception. This is also what happens in the case of colors. . . . Cezanne's genius is through the total arrangement of the picture to make the deformations in perspective cease to be visible in themselves when we look at them in the lump; and they only contribute, as they do in natural vision, to give the impression of an order in process of birth, an object in

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process of appearing, of collecting itself under our eyes. In the same way, the contour of objects conceived as a line which surrounds them does not belong to the visible world but to geometry. If we mark with a stroke the contour of an apple, we make a thing of it, when, in fact, this is the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple flee in depth. Not to mark any contour would be to remove from objects their identity. To mark a single contour would be to sacrifice the depth: that is, the dimension which the thing gives us, not as spread out before us, but as full of resources and as an inexhaustible reality. That is why Cezanne will follow by a colored modulation the swelling of the object and will mark several contours by blue strokes. The glance, referred from one to the other, seizes a contour in process of birth among them all, as it does in perception. There is nothing less arbitrary than these celebrated deformations—which, moreover, Cezanne will abandon in his last period, starting from 1890, when he will no longer fill his canvas with colors and give up the crowded composition of still lifes.

The pattern then must result from the color, if we wish the world to be rendered in its thickness, for it is a mass without gaps, an arrangement of colors, across which the avoidance of perspective, the contours, the straight lines, the curves, are established like lines of force; the frame of space is constituted by vibrations. "The design and the color are no longer distinct; in proportion as one paints, one draws; the more the color harmonizes, the more precise is the drawing. . . . When the color attains its richness, the form attains its fullness." Cezanne does not seek to *suggest* through the color the tactile sensations which give form and depth. In the primordial perception these distinctions of touch and sight are unknown. It is the science of the human body which teaches us afterwards to distinguish between our senses. The real thing is not recognized or constructed from sense-data, but is offered at once as the center from which they radiate. We *see* the depth, smoothness, softness, hardness of objects—Cezanne even said: their odor. If the painter wishes to express the world, the arrangement of colors must carry in itself this indivisible whole; otherwise his painting will be an allusion to things and will not give them the imperious unity, the presence, the density impossible to surpass, which is for us all the definition of reality. This is why each touch given must satisfy an infinite number of conditions, this is why Cezanne meditated sometimes for an hour before putting it down; it must, as Bernard expresses it, "contain air, light, object, plane, character, design, style." To express what *exists* is an infinite task.

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Nor did Cezanne neglect the physiognomy of objects and faces: he wished only to seize it as it emerged from the color. To paint a face "as an object," is not to rob it of its "thought." "I understand that the painter interprets it," Cezanne said, "the painter is not an imbecile." But this interpretation must not be a thought separate from vision. "If I paint all the little blues and all the little browns, I make him look as he looks. . . . The deuce with them if they suspect how, by marrying a shaded green to a red, the mouth is made sad or the cheeks to smile." The mind is seen and read in the looks, which are, however, only color ensembles. Other minds are only offered to us incarnate, bound to a face and gestures. It is of no use to oppose here distinctions of soul and body, of thought and vision, since Cezanne returns precisely to the primordial experience whence these notions are drawn and which gives them to us as inseparable. The painter who thinks and who seeks expression at once misses the mystery—renewed each time that we look at someone—of appearance in nature. Balzac describes in his *Wild Ass's Skin* a "tablecloth as white as a blanket of newfallen snow, on which the table-things arise symmetrically, crowned by yellow rolls." "Throughout my youth," said Cezanne, "I wanted to paint that : that tablecloth of newfallen snow. . . . I know now that one must *will* to paint only: 'The table-things arose symmetrically,' and: 'yellow rolls.' If I paint 'crowned,' I am up a tree, understand? And if I balance and shade my cloths and my rolls truly as in nature, be sure that the crowns, the snow and all the trembling will be there."

We live surrounded by objects contructed by men, among utensils, houses, streets, cities, and most of the time we see them only through the human actions of which they can be the points of application. We are accustomed to think that all this exists by necessity and is immovable. The painting of Cezanne suspends these habits and reveals the non-human background of nature on which man establishes himself. This is why people are strange, as though seen by a being of another species. Nature itself is despoiled of the attributes which prepare it for animistic communions: the countryside is without wind, the water of the lake of Annecy motionless, the congealed objects hesitant as at the beginning of the world. It is an unfamiliar world, we are uneasy in it, it forbids all human effusion. If we go to see other painters upon leaving the pictures of Cezanne, there is a relaxation, as conversations, resumed after a period of mourning, conceal this absolute newness and restore to the living their solidity. But man alone is really capable of this vision that goes to the very roots, on this side of established humanity. Everything shows that ani-

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mals do not know how to *look,* to drive into things without stopping for anything but the truth. In saying that the painter of realities is a monkey, Emile Bernard says exactly the opposite of the truth, and we understand how Cezanne could recover the classic definition of art: man added to nature.

His painting denies neither science nor tradition. In Paris, Cezanne went to the Louvre every day. He thought that painting is to be learned, that the geometrical study of planes and forms is necessary. He studied the geological structure of the countryside. These abstract relations should operate in the act of painting, but ordered according to the visible world. When he places a brush-stroke, anatomy and drawing are there, like the rules of the game in a tennis match. What motivates the stroke of a painter can never be solely perspective or geometry or the laws of the breakdown of colors or any other knowledge whatever. There is only one motive for all the strokes which, little by little, make a picture: the landscape in its totality and absolute fullness—which Cezanne calls a "motif." He began by uncovering geological layers. Then, said Mme. Cezanne, he moved no more but watched, his eyes dilated. He "germinated" with the landscape. It was a question, all science forgotten, of grasping again *by means of* these sciences, the constitution of the landscape as an organism in the process of birth. It was necessary to weld together all the partial views which the eye saw, to reunite what became dispersed by the variability of the eyes, "to join the wandering hands of nature," says Gasquet. "A minute of the world is passing, one must paint it in its reality." The meditation suddenly achieved its realization. "I have my motif," said Cezanne, and he explained that the landscape must be grasped neither too high nor too low, but trapped alive in a snare which lets nothing pass. Then he attacked his picture from all sides at once, surrounded the first charcoal draught, the geological skeleton, with spots of color. The picture became saturated, tied in, drawn, balanced, came all at once to maturity. The landscape, he said, is reflected in me and I am its consciousness. Nothing is further from naturalism than this intuitive knowledge. Art is not an imitation, not even a fabrication following the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is an operation of expression. As the word assigns a name, that is, grasps in its nature and places before us as a recognizable object what appeared confusedly, the painter, says Gasquet, "objectivizes," "projects," "fixes." As the word does not *resemble* what it designates, painting is not a deception; Cezanne, in his own words, "writes as a painter what has not yet

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been painted and renders it absolute painting." We forget the viscous, equivocal appearances of things; through them we pass straight to the things they represent. The painter takes up and converts into a visible object what, without him, remains enclosed in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things. For this painter a single emotion is possible: the feeling of strangeness; a single lyricism: that of existence constantly recommencing.

Leonardo da Vinci took as his motto: stubborn accuracy; all the classical creative arts declare that the work is difficult. But the difficulties of Cezanne—as of Balzac or Mallarmé—are not of this classical kind. Balzac imagines, doubtless from suggestions of Delacroix, a painter who wishes to express life itself purely by colors and keeps his masterpiece hidden. When Frenhofer dies, his friends find only a chaos of colors, of indiscernible lines, a whole wall of painting. Cezanne was moved to tears when he read *The Unknown Masterpiece* and declared that he himself was Frenhofer. The effort of Balzac, who was also obsessed by "realization," makes Cezanne's understandable. He speaks in the *Wild Ass's Skin* of a "thought to express," a "system to construct," a "science to explain." Louis Lambert, a genius manqué of *The Human Comedy,* says: "I am moving toward certain discoveries; what name can I give to the power which binds my hands, closes my mouth and leads me in the opposite direction from my vocation?" It is not enough to say that Balzac proposed to understand the society of his time. To describe the type of the traveling salesman, to make an "anatomy of the teaching professions," or to found a sociology—this was not a superhuman task. Having once named the visible forces, like money and the passions, having once described their manifest functioning, Balzac asked himself what all this was leading to, what was its reason for existence, what, for example, this Europe *means* "in which every effort strains toward some mystery, I know not what, of civilization"; what nourishes the world within and makes the visible forms multiply. For Frenhofer, the meaning of painting is the same: "A hand is not simply joined to a body, it expresses a thought which must be seized and rendered. . . . The real struggle is there! Many painters triumph instinctively without recognizing this theme of art. You draw a woman, but you do not see her." The artist is he who fixes and makes accessible to the most "human" of men the spectacle in which they participate without seeing.

There is, then, no art of pleasing. One can invent pleasing ob-

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jects by binding together differently ideas already prepared, by presenting objects already seen. This painting—this second-hand word, so to speak—is what is generally understood by culture. The artist, according to Balzac or Cezanne, is not to be a cultivated animal, he assumes culture from the start and builds it anew, he speaks as the first man spoke and paints as if no one had ever painted. Expression cannot, then, be the translation of a thought already clear, since thoughts are those which have already been stated among ourselves or others. "Conception" cannot precede "execution." Before expression, there is nothing but a vague fever and only the finished, understood work will show that *something* rather than *nothing* was to be found. Because he has returned for his knowledge to the mute and solitary depths of experience on which culture and the exchange of ideas are built, the artist launches his work as a man launched the first word, without knowing whether it will be anything more than a cry, whether it will be able to detach itself from the flux of individual life where it was born and to present—whether to this same life in its future, to the monads which co-exist with it, or to the open community of future monads—the independent existence of an identifiable *meaning*. The meaning of what we call the artist is nowhere, neither in things, which are not yet meanings, nor in himself, in his unformulated life. He appeals from reason already constructed, in which "cultivated men" are enclosed to a reason which embraces his very origins. When Bernard wished to bring him back to the human intelligence, Cezanne answered: "I turn toward the intelligence of the *Pater Omnipotens*." He turned, in any case, towards the idea or project of an infinite Logos.

The uncertainty and solitude of Cezanne are not explained, in their essence, by his nervous constitution, but by the intent of his work. Heredity had given him rich sensations, made him emotionally receptive, given him vague feelings of anguish or mystery which disorganized his self-willed life and cut him off from men; but these gifts make a work only through the act of expression, and count for nothing either in the difficulties or the virtues of this act. The difficulties of Cezanne are those of the first word. He believed himself impotent because he was not omnipotent, because he was not God and because he wished to paint the world, to transmute it in its entirety into a picture, to make *visible* the way in which it *touches* us. A new theory of physics can be proved because the idea or meaning is bound by calculation with measurements belonging to a domain already common to all men. A painter like Cezanne, an artist, a philosopher,

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must not only create and express an idea, but also awaken experiences which will implant it in other consciousnesses. If the work is successful, it has the strange power of teaching itself. By following the indications of the picture or book, establishing verifications, knocking here and there, guided by the clarity, still obscure, of the style, the reader or spectator ends by discovering what the artist wished to communicate to him. The painter could only construct an image. He must wait for this image to come alive for others. Then the work of art will have joined these separate lives, it will no longer exist in one of them as a tenacious dream or a persistent delirium, or in space as a piece of colored canvas, but will live undivided in many minds, presumably in every possible mind, as a permanent acquisition.

Thus "heredities,"—the accidents of Cezanne,—are the text which nature and history have given him as his share to decipher. They furnish only the literal meaning of his work. The creations of the artist, as elsewhere the free decisions of man, impose on this datum a figurative sense which did not exist before them. If the life of Cezanne seems to us to carry his work in germ, it is because we know the work first, and, seeing through it the circumstances of his life, we charge them with a meaning borrowed from the work. Cezanne's data, which we enumerate as insistent conditions, if they were to figure in the tissue of projects which he was, could only do so by presenting themselves to him as what had to be lived, while leaving undetermined the manner of living. A necessary theme at the start, they are, reinvested in the existence which embraces them, only the monogram and the emblem of a life which interprets itself freely.

But let us understand this freedom. Let us guard against imagining some abstract force which superimposes its effects on the "given" of life, or which introduces breaks in its development. It is certain that the life does not *explain* the work, but certain also that they communicate with each other. The truth is: *to do this work demands this life.* From the beginning, the life of Cezanne found its equilibrium only by leaning on the future work; the work was the life's project, and is announced there by premonitory signs which we would be wrong to take as causes, but which make of the work and the life a single venture. Here there are neither causes nor effects, they are joined together in the simultaneity of an eternal Cezanne who is the formula at the same time of what he wanted to be and of what he wanted to do. There is a relation between the schizoid constitution and Cezanne's work because the work reveals a metaphysical meaning of

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the illness—schizoidism as the reduction of the world to the totality of fixed appearances and as a suspension of expressive values—because the illness ceases then to be an absurd fact and a fate, in order to become a general possibility of human existence when it affronts with consequence one of its paradoxes—the phenomenon of expression; and because, finally, it is the same thing, in this sense, to be Cezanne and to be schizoid.

We do not know, then, how to separate creative freedom from the least deliberate forms of behavior which reveal themselves already in the first acts of Cezanne the child and in the way things affect him. The meaning which Cezanne will give to things and faces in his pictures is suggested to him by the very world which is apparent to him. Cezanne has only set it free, these are the same things and same faces, just as he sees them, which demanded to be painted in this way and Cezanne has only said what they *wanted* to say. . . . But where is freedom? We can see only in front of us and under the aspect of ends what we ourselves are, so that our life has always the form of a project or a choice and appears to us therefore as spontaneous. But to say that we are from the outset the design of a future, is to say also that our project has already stopped with our first modes of being, that the choice is already made when we draw our first breath. If nothing constrains us from the outside it is because we are our entire exterior. This eternal Cezanne as we see him first arising, attracting to the man Cezanne the events and the influences which we believe exterior to him, and who designed all that befell him—this attitude toward men and the world which has not been deliberated, free with regard to external causes, is it free with regard to itself? Is not the choice pushed back prior to the life, and is there choice where there is not yet a clearly articulated field of possibilities but only one probable choice, like a single temptation? If I am from birth a project, it is impossible then to distinguish in me between the given and the created, impossible then not only to plan a single movement which would not be simply hereditary or innate and non-spontaneous, but also a single movement which would be absolutely new with regard to this way of being in the world which is me from the beginning. It is the same thing to say that our life is all constructed or that it is all given. If there is a true freedom, it can only be in the current of life, by going beyond our point of departure, and without our ceasing meanwhile to be the same—such is the problem. Two things are certain with regard to freedom: that we are never determined and that we never change; that, retrospectively, we will always be able to

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find in our past the forecast of what we have become. It is for us to understand both things at once and how freedom dawns in us without breaking our bonds with the world.

Whatever arbitrariness there be in the *explanations* of Freud cannot discredit the *psychoanalytic intuition*. More than once the reader is arrested by the insufficiency of the proofs. Why this and not something else? The question seems to present itself all the more in that Freud often gives many interpretations: each symptom was, according to him, "overdetermined." Finally, it is clear that a doctrine which brings in sexuality everywhere could not, according to the rules of inductive logic, establish its efficacy anywhere; since it deprives itself of all counter-proof by excluding in advance every differential case. Thus we triumph over psychoanalysis, but on paper only. For the suggestions of the psychoanalyst, if they can never be proved, can no longer be eliminated: how impute to chance the complex harmonies which the psychoanalyst discovers between the child and the adult? How deny that psychoanalysis has taught us to perceive, from one moment to the next of a life, echoes, allusions, repetitions, a linking up which we would not dream of doubting if Freud had made a correct theory of it. The purpose of psychoanalysis is not to give us, as do the natural sciences, necessary relations of cause and effect, but to indicate relations of motivation which, on principle, are simply possibilities. More precisely: birth and the past define for each life fundamental categories or dimensions which do not impose any act in particular, but which are read or discovered in everything. The very decisions which transform us are always taken with regard to a situation of fact, and a situation of fact can be accepted or refused, but cannot in any case fail to provide our impetus and to be itself for us, as a situation "to accept" or "to refuse," the incarnation of the value which we give it. If the object of psychoanalysis is to describe this exchange between future and past and to show how each life dreams of enigmas whose final meaning is not written anywhere in advance, we do not have to exact from it inductive rigor. The hermeneutic daydreams of the psychoanalyst, who multiplies our communications to each other, take sexuality as a symbol of existence and existence as a symbol of sexuality, seek the meaning of the future in the past and the meaning of the past in the future—are better adapted than rigorous induction to the circular movement of our life, which leans its future on its past, its past on its future, and where everything symbolizes everything. Psychoanalysis does not render freedom impossible; rather it teaches us to conceive it concretely, as a creative

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repetition of ourselves, in retrospect always faithful to ourselves.

It is true, then, both that the life of an author teaches us nothing and that, if we knew how to read it, we would find everything there, since it opens onto the work. As we observe the movements of some unknown animal without understanding the law which inhabits and governs it, thus Cezanne's witnesses do not guess the transmutations which he made events and experiences undergo; they are blind to the significance, to this gleam from nowhere which envelops him at moments. But he is never at his center, nine days out of ten he sees around him only the misery of his empirical life and of his attempts that have failed, crumb of an unknown festival. It is in the world still, on canvas, with colors, that he must realize his freedom. It is from others, from their assent, that he must await the proof of his worth. That is why he questions the picture being born under his hand, why he is on the watch for the eyes of others focused upon his canvas. That is why he never finished working. We never abandon our life. We never see the idea of freedom face to face.

(*Translated by Juliet Bigney*)

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Books

THE RESISTANCE

WOULD MISS MARGARET ANDERSON ever have dreamed, during those high bohemian days when she was living in a tent beside Lake Michigan and editing *The Little Review,* that there would some day be a scholarly textbook[1] on the little magazines? Well, if we don't have as much fun any more, at least we have the satisfaction of being more closely watched by the scholarly chaperones: the very existence of this book shows that the avant-garde has become institutionalized to the extent that the little magazine is now accepted as a more or less permanent sideshow in our culture. Unfortunately, the academic quality of this text illustrates another and equally serious direction toward which the institutionalizing has been moving. It is a useful book, to be sure, but the usefulness resides chiefly in Miss Carolyn Ulrich's bibliography (with Mr. Hoffman's appended notes), which is long and looks thorough. As for the text of Messrs. Hoffman and Allen, the worst that can be said, and said very briefly, is that it has missed the principal opportunity of its theme—nothing less than to do the "sociology" of the American writer over a period in which his situation has been very rapidly evolving and which leaves his very existence now more problematical than ever. Two necessary gifts for this task would have been a sharp journalistic eye for background and a sharp sense of historical change, both of which the authors lack, to such an extent that the reader would hardly gather from their text what enormous shifts have occurred from the situation of the twenties to that of the forties. And these deficiencies have not been helped by a too complete surrender to certain critical habits now in vogue in some of our literary reviews. The authors are just too nice and polite to everyone all round; and this history (like most others) could have been done successfully only from a very much more critical and partisan point of view. Evidently the avant-garde has become institutionalized to the extent that it has now evolved a set of hierarchical

1. THE LITTLE MAGAZINE, A HISTORY AND A BIBLIOGRAPHY. *By Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, Carolyn F. Ulrich. Princeton University Press.* $3.75.

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figures who are always and automatically to be spoken well of—and quite uncritically well at times.

But what a triumph it is! and how irresistible the temptation to wave before the complacent eyes of Publishers Row the list of writers who have come up through the little magazines! Eliot, Joyce, Pound, Hemingway, Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Sherwood Anderson, William Carlos Williams, and a good many others. Unfortunately, Messrs. Hoffman and Allen choose to wave it apologetically rather than defiantly—as if the little magazines had no other function but to serve as talent scouts for the big houses, as way stations on the road to Publishers Row. In their first chapter, for example, there is the unfortunate extended metaphor of Hemingway's snowballing reputation, starting from the small pellet of snow launched by the little magazines until presently Hemingway has rolled into the offices of Charles Scribners' Sons. The trouble with this metaphor is that the usefulness of the little magazine seems to have ceased after it has given the first little snowball its push. Here the authors have unconsciously submitted to the schizophrenic split in our culture between commercial and noncommercial writing: the significant and troubling question, which they do not raise, would be whether Hemingway himself, after his early days in Paris, after he had snowballed into the Scribners' office, ever bothered to read a little magazine again, much less write for one. Significantly, when the authors do come to speak of the continuous function of a literary review within our society, they use such adjectives as "dignified" and "sober." As if it were a question of "dignity" and not an uninterrupted warfare!

Here the sociology and history of their subject shine through the very choice of words—even if the authors themselves have not had a very keen eye for it. Why did they fail to concentrate on this tendency which they embody so fully? Probably they could not be conscious of it just because they embody it so fully.

One of the best recent treatments of the whole sociology[2] of American writing is by R. P. Blackmur on "The Economy of the American Writer," and it is perhaps to be regretted that Blackmur himself did not write the present book on the spadework of its authors. But the sociology that Blackmur sketches is itself very incomplete, and the main terms of his analysis—the notion of America as a frontier country, without a settled class traditionally devoted to culture, and

2. Here, and throughout, I am using the term "sociology" in the *completely descriptive* sense of Max Weber.

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the application of the "market system" to literature upon this frontier base—do not characterize concretely enough the situation we now face. True, the market system is an essential feature of our economy, but it hardly characterizes capitalism in its productive, socially dynamic aspect, or in its social and human aspect as a specific relation between producer and consumer. From Blackmur's abstract talk of "the market system" we might never gather that there are real flesh-and-blood human beings who *deliberately* and *cunningly* reap huge profits from the ignorance, pathetic fantasies, and helpless fear of boredom of other large masses of human beings. What we now face is expressed more adequately as a situation of *cultural exploitation* conducted with constantly augmenting outlays of capital, constantly wider and lower standards of mass appeal, and a consequent *bureaucratizing* of all personnel engaged in production. And these two features—cultural exploitation and bureaucratization of the writer—make up the background against which the little magazine has been developing over the last three decades, and which its own changing directions reflect.

This history—at least what is relevant for us here, for the prehistory of the little magazine hardly relates itself very concretely to our present situation—begins with the 'teens, a period of real ferment in America when we have such new reviews as *The Masses* (1911-17), *Poetry* (1912-), *The Little Review* (1914-29), *The Liberator* (1918-24). Over this decade, in which Eliot and Pound have departed from America, hangs also the shadow of Henry James's long exile abroad, and the expatriate themes—the revolt against America as a provincial and frontier country, against the genteel tradition, together with a longing for the new, fresh, and even shocking in literature—still figure, and it is significant that *The Little Review* eventually moves to Paris. But now these older themes are transformed by two newer developments: a sense of the possibilities and ferment in American life, which *The Seven Arts* explicitly announces as "the beginning of that national self-consciousness which is the beginning of greatness"; and the appearance of a mature radicalism, which becomes, in its cultural aspect, an avenue of escape from American provincialism, since it links up the Left intelligentsia with political movements all over the world.

Between the twenties and the 'teens there is no essential break, one of the rare instances of continuity in American culture, and World War I itself provides an extraordinary acceleration away from intellectual isolation and provincialism. The expatriated sensibility still

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flourishes, but it has now fructified *in America itself* as a more strongly developed sense of the international scene, toward which the Russian Revolution, as well as the war, have been powerful catalytic agents. And despite all its intellectual crudities and immaturities, reflected by Mencken and others, despite Prohibition, ballyhoo, the emergence of the automobile as a national religion, the twenties nevertheless seem to announce the promised beginning, the founding of a genuine literary tradition at once highly American and international. Hence, *The Dial* attains in this period the greatest public success of any literary review in our history; and there are, besides it, *The Fugitive* (1922-25), *The Hound and Horn* (1927-34), *The New Masses* (1926-), although after 1928 this last quickly ceases to be relevant to either American intelligence or literature, or to anything very much except the advancing worldwide degradation of the Left. One very notable, if small, casualty the decade suffered at its beginning, in the death of Randolph Bourne before he could take over editorship of *The Dial,* which consequently never possessed a distinct political direction and helped establish the dangerous American tradition of the "purely literary" magazine.

But in the passage from the twenties to thirties, and by the middle of the thirties, the great promise has been killed. The relation to Europe has slowly changed and Europe itself is no longer a permanent recourse. The emergence of fascism has been the first signal of the long European defeat, until now in the middle forties Europe has so far ceased as a possibility of expatriation that the very continuance of its civilization has come in question: after passing through two world wars without showing now the least sign of any politically creative idea or program which would solve its problems, Europe seems to have reached that particular stage of history where the great civilizations of the past have succumbed—precisely when they have lost their political creativity. Other poisons that have been developing inside the twenties reach their fatal virulence toward the end of the decade: Hollywood, the Luce publications, the radio, Stalinism, *The New Yorker* (which exploits the new and rapidly growing audience of the sophisticated middlebrow zombie). The forties now face television, which will make the popular taste for cozy home drama all the more easily gratified and place another barrier between the American and his reading. The Resistance, of course, goes on during the thirties, but the occupying armies have changed, grown much more organized and formidable; and against such forces the older carefree, lighthearted, and often lightheaded bohemianism of the twenties dis-

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appears, for the Resistance itself is now more isolated, scattered, and exposed to more treacherous internal dangers. Constance Rourke, writing of Henry James, remarks that America's literary history has always been a disconnected sequence of isolated battlements stormed without the following-up occupation and consolidation by the main body of troops. The transition from twenties to thirties is, in this sense, a perfectly American chapter of history.

Max Weber, extending and modifying Marx, has perhaps made the most comprehensive demonstration of the process of bureaucratization as a widespread feature of modern society, and particularly of capitalism in its corporate stage. Hollywood, Luce, and the radio carry the bureaucratization of the writer furthest in this country. A staff of writers is manipulated and strategically disposed like a group of factory hands on an assembly line. The product evolved from this communal labor becomes perforce of increasing slickness and shiny metallic skill, but correspondingly more unauthentic as art (unauthentic precisely because the bureaucratization removes all personal being from the work), and of an ever flashier emptiness of content. (As the style has become more adept and slick, we occasionally have to read a piece in *Time* twice to see how totally inadequate and false it is to its material.) Moreover, the bureaucracies overlap and reinforce each other: publishers now strive to "catch up with and surpass" Hollywood in the wholesale manufacture of best-sellers from prefabricated parts and prearranged designs, precisely as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer calculates in advance just what plots and stars will register at the box office. Following Hollywood, publishers know they can sell absolutely any book—even a dull religious novel—by the millions through the pressures of social imitation induced by high-pressure advertising. The writers themselves can now move easily and without a change of pace from one to another of the mutually reinforcing bureaucracies: notice that the older Luce writers had an avant-garde pre-history and some of them still seek to placate an uneasy conscience by occasionally writing for the little magazines; the newer Lucemen very efficiently eliminate both the detour and the uneasiness, and John Hersey can pass from *Life* to the best-seller list to Broadway to Hollywood without even so much as breaking stride at any point.

Though an international phenomenon, this bureaucratization of the writer nevertheless exhibits a variety of pattern from country to country. In Russia the political bureaucratization of the writer is complete, but he is still treated more or less as an individual producer and has not yet been absorbed as completely into the system of the

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division of labor. This is perfectly in line with what we should expect from the technical backwardness of Russia and from the relative absence of political bureaucracy in America. Jean-Paul Sartre has lately protested against the bureaucratization of the writer in France, where it follows still another pattern. For the French government, literature is an asset for export, an *industrie du pays,* and particularly an *industrie de luxe* like millinery, perfume, and champagnes. The French writer is at least more fortunate in being assimilated to the handcraftsman, the milliner, rather than to the factory hand of mass production, though he is exposed to the attendant danger that literature may be thought of as an elegant confection—which may be one reason why French writers have lately been trying to escape into the violence and raw realism of American fiction. Despite the different national lines, we should expect that the general direction of evolution will be toward a combination of the Russian and American situations.

On its productive side a bureaucratization of the writer, this process functions, in its social relation to the whole class of consumers, as a *cultural exploitation* of the audience. Even the economy itself of this new exploitation does not seem to tally precisely with the traditional Marxist analysis in terms of surplus value: for it is really the audience that is now being exploited, and forms the source of profits, rather than the surplus value created by the industry's workers. Coal seams give out and oil wells dry up, but the ignorance, crudity, and sentimentality of the masses represent an unlimited field of raw material to be worked by Hollywood, which perpetuates these tastes that it gratifies.

Here quantity has really changed to quality (to borrow the old metaphor), and though this exploitation is continuous with older popular kitsch of calendar art and "serving girls' novels," in being carried on as a big business it emerges as a really new historical phenomenon. In its widest historical frame, what we are now living through is the interregnum of the masses. Arthur Koestler has already used this notion of an historical interregnum—as he develops it, the interregnum between the present hostile and warring condition of great "vertical" national states and some future period of unification through a genuine "horizontal" or international ferment. But if such a ferment is ever to come, it will have to come from and transform the masses, and the whole historical condition ought therefore to be described outright from a class basis. We are living through a period when the masses have risen to a level where they have been able

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to enter on the threshold of modern history, but are still unable to make their own authentic history. They have been led into a revolution but have yet to make their own revolution. They do not stand outside of history like the feudal serf, they are a principal force in modern history, but only as the inert passive masses to be manipulated by dictators in culture as well as by dictators in politics.

A return to an earlier stage when a settled traditional class embodied an aristocracy of culture has been advocated by some prominent literary men like Eliot and Tate, and it is strongly hinted at by Blackmur. Such a return might actually occur in the event of a general smash-up of modern society and technology; but to espouse it as a deliberate social and political program is thoroughly naïve, since one lesson from history we cannot afford to forget is precisely that the return to a former social structure is never a return to the highest level produced by that structure, but to a level very much lower, and being inevitably the accompaniment of a process of major historic dissolution, it is more than likely to sink to the lowest level, close to barbarism —like Italy after the dissolution of the Roman Empire. There is no recourse but that, living through the interregnum, we continue the Resistance grimly, patiently, with all the strength we have, toward the only possible liberating condition into which the present might open: when society has reached such a level as to permit the masses to become authentically human.

What happens meanwhile to the avant-garde while these processes of bureaucratization and cultural exploitation are overrunning the whole terrain of the national consciousness like an army of tanks? It is driven further afield, into a more remote corner of American life: the academic cloister. *The Southern Review* reflected thus an enormous change beyond the metropolitan and bohemian reviews of the 'teens and twenties. The connection with the university seems to promise more security for editors and writers, as well as to minimize the element of half-baked bohemianism, but it also brings with it new and considerable dangers. The American university, for one thing, is very corrupt and in a very uncertain relation to American life. The writer, remaining outside the university, may have a better chance to operate some leaven in the life of the university, than, attached to the university, to have any influence upon American life itself. *The Southern Review* in its last years offered considerable evidence to support this; consider the proportion of contributions in that period which were thoroughly scholastic dissections of Eliot, the late Yeats,

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Joyce, and the other earlier great of the avant-garde; a state of affairs for which the editors were not quite to blame perhaps, since the late thirties and early forties, relatively sterile periods, had to live by exhibiting the corpse of their more creative parent, the twenties. *The Southern Review* was rapidly becoming a review written by English teachers for English teachers—not that I have anything against English teachers, some of my best friends, etc. . . . But being determines thought, and you cannot live in the midst of an English faculty (with the peculiar qualities of professional American scholars) without becoming infected, especially under the urgency of academic advancement, with the point of view of your colleagues, who for their part have stakes in preserving their own form of bureaucratic specialization expressed by PMLA. Much of the critical writing by the academic avant-garde in recent years has tended to differ from the PMLA contributions of their colleagues, not so much in fundamental interest or temper, as in mere choice of subject—Eliot and the late Yeats instead of, say, Shelley and Browning. The consciousness of what has been called "the new criticism," which is one of the distinct products of the little magazine in its late stage, is born out of this same state of being, and reveals only too clearly the stamp of its academic origin. Although it has produced several brilliant readings of isolated works, its critical impulse remains all too obviously pedagogical, concerned with deploying the process of reading itself, which criticism had hitherto taken for granted as already digested by the critic. Though such criticism is, in part, a struggle against a society where reading has become a passive and passing indulgence requiring only one-twentieth of even the normal brain's capacity, it also represents a defeat and an acquiescence by the critic in his own alienation as he retires from the struggle of modern life into a corner with his text. The new type of literary provincialism that has appeared on the American scene now invariably wears an academic cap and gown.

The connection with the university seems to augur that there may be, now and in the near future, more money available for literary reviews. In a surplus economy, such as ours normally is, some crumbs are bound to fall from the table of the rich capitalist feast, even for an intelligent purpose. But what a miserable pittance they are if one stops to think of the hare-brained, degraded, and useless schemes into which money is daily poured, as down a drain, in our society! And, of course, a new problem arises from the dangerous contagion of the point of view of the money's source. The genteel tradition is not an isolated episode of our history, conquered and

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done with once for all, but a permanent threat to the intellectual and literary condition in a society whose main drives are exhausted in the prestige and accumulation of money and which will permit culture to exist only as a polite and decorative display on the margins of its own existence. The way things are now going, with everyone sweating so damned hard to be genteel, it will soon be impossible to insult anyone in print. And when the Resistance has turned genteel, it is already part of the Collaboration. The review that wishes no leash upon its independence will probably find itself existing on the same thin shoestring as in the 'teens and twenties—and against persistently mounting costs of printing and paper, such as those happier decades never knew. As it is, the printer who puts out your review will have—with his union card and his trade recognized by society—a much better and more assured living than your writers or editors.

While the avant-garde retreats into the academy, the metropolis itself loses its old character as a cultural center. If we are to have a cultural center anywhere in America, presumably it would be New York. But what do we find? New York has become the great Philistine Capital, at the center of whose island fittingly stands, several acres in area, the vast Temple of the Soap Opera, Radio City. And the alienation in New York is so great that between Greenwich Village and the center of town there is not even a possible medium of communication, while between the smaller groups in the Village there are no common presuppositions or mutual subordination. Mr. Dwight Macdonald manages to publish from the heart of New York a magazine, which for its crackerbox bluster, wide-eyed idealism, and ingénue dogmatism might just as well be put out at some tiny whistle-stop in Oklahoma. Without wishing in the least to minimize Macdonald's extraordinary accomplishment in this, I do think it must be clear to anyone that if there were such a thing as a New York climate, a New York intellectual atmosphere or current of ideas—if, that is, the metropolis really functioned as a cultural center—even he might find it immensely more difficult, perhaps impossible, to pull off such a trick. And as long as the big money keeps pouring into New York and sloshing about, the swamp of Broadway, the radio writers, the sleek publicity men, are going to spread all over the island, choking, gagging, and submerging the smaller groups, which will become ever more "splintered off" from one another.

Such are some of the main points in the sociology of the American writer as he tries to pick himself up in the mid-decade of the

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forties after the ravages of the second World War. I admit it is not a cheerful picture, but, as Sholom Aleichem would say, if it weren't true, would I have said so? The metaphor of the Resistance has long since become the literal reality. True, you are not lined up against a wall and shot by the authorities of the occupation; but if not in blood you pay in neurosis, in the wreck of body and the drain of energy, disturbance of the heart, stomach, liver, and the galling impatience and powerlessness of all your days. And unlike that other Resistance you are denied the consolation of feeling yourself particularly a hero, you do not have the nervous release into the violence of throwing a bomb at the Wehrmacht generals like Louis B. Mayer or Henry Luce. But looking back at the long and motley collection which Miss Ulrich's bibliography spreads before us, and allowing too for all the crackpot bohemian, half-baked and self-indulgent attitudes that have sprouted there, shall we not also accord to them too the title of "hero"?

WILLIAM BARRETT

THE POET AND HIS PUBLIC

LOCAL MEASURES. *By Josephine Miles. Reynal & Hitchcock.* $2.00.
WOMEN OF THE HAPPY ISLAND. *By Adam Drinan. William MacLellan, Glasgow.* 3/6.
A LITTLE TREASURY OF MODERN POETRY. *Edited by Oscar Williams. Scribner's.* $2.75.
POEMS 1938-45. *By Robert Graves. Creative Age.* $2.00.
LOUGH DERG. *By Denis Devlin. Reynal & Hitchcock.* $2.00.
PATERSON (BOOK I). *By William Carlos William. New Directions.* $2.50.
NORTH AND SOUTH. *By Elizabeth Bishop. Houghton Mifflin.* $2.00.

IN JOSEPHINE MILES' poems some overspecialized sensitivity and ability come to a cautionary end—mostly because Miss Miles asks surprisingly little of herself, and seems to feel that the world and poetry ask even less. Each of the poems in *Local Measures*—an acute title—fits conveniently on a single page: the poem is not the worked-out, required, sometimes lengthy expression of a subject that is trying to realize itself through Miss Miles, but only one more product of the Miles method for turning out Miles poems. These seem easily different from anybody else's poems, but hardly distinguishable from one another: their language, tone, and mechanism of effect have a relishingly idiosyncratic and monotonous regularity, as if they were the diary some impressionable but unimpas-

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sioned monomaniac had year by year been engraving on the side of a knitting-needle. Miss Miles specializes in the sly, dry, minimal observation. The poems are full of the conversational elegance of understatement, of a carefully awkward and mannered charm. Everything is just a little off; is, always, the precisely unexpected: so that after a while it becomes the expected, and the repetitions of words, the omissions of words or phrases required by ordinary syntax, the little voluntary tricks of technique, seem as automatic as the emotions or ideas they accompany. Certainly the poems are "sincere" (else why say no more than this?) and personal (though perhaps in the beginning they were derived from certain possibilities in the poems of Marianne Moore and John Ransom); sometimes the phrases are good and the perceptions real, and I suppose it is nicer to have them come to nothing by Miss Miles' private formula than by one bought from the authorities of the day. But she is sadly bureaucratized. To write really good poems, not her individualized cultivated little affairs, she would have to have a change of heart—or else spend years on a corrective, some violent emotional epic, and thus in the end be dragged back to a better and more ordinary sort of poetry. But in some way she must come to be possessed by her daemon, instead of possessing him so complacently. If the fool persisted in his folly he would become wise, said Blake; but he said nothing of the sort about the wisdom in which the foolish more ordinarily persist.

Adam Drinan's *Women of the Happy Island* is unusual and attractive. It is half prose and half poems: the poems are said by the people of a small Scotch island, and the prose—which is better than the poetry, generally—tells you who says the poem, and where, and how. The poems are extremely uneven in technique and realization; they have many faults, but they also have enough affection and knowledge to convince you that Mr. Drinan is a writer in the only sense in which it matters to be one. If he learns to get into his poems everything that is in his prose he will be a good poet. It is a pleasure to read a new poet who loves and understands people and the world, instead of language and rhetoric and allusions, the rules and writers of the fashionable schools. It would take a great deal of quotation to convey the freshness and proportion and honesty of some of this writing, its closeness to what it describes; when you finish Mr. Drinan's book you have read few good poems, but you have seen the things of his book as they are, you have known the island. A girl writes home from the war, and says that she

> *. . . never again will loiter down to the shore*
> *clapping my hands and whistling and calling*
> *To the men-faced seals on the skerries any more . . .*
>
> *. . . nor watch them heaving on their clumsy hands . . .*

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. . . For I have looked, O mother in whose breast
I used to hide my face when I was frightened,
on men that had been burned alive,
their hands bent and fingers fused like flippers,
Their not quite human features not quite seals'.

And Mr. Drinan begins his book:

(Over this island the wind sweeps continuously. . . . Sometimes it passes angrily and with noise; sometimes it crawls almost imperceptibly, sometimes it seems to disappear altogether. But always it is passing over.

At the moment the wind is soft and leisurely. The daylight is fading from the levels at which people live. Up a pass from one house-studded bay to another, two figures are walking, a man and a woman, like ants on a knucklebone. In the western entrance to the pass the sun sets: in the eastern entrance the moon rises.)

I've never met anyone who has heard of this writer; in these days, when American publishers have the money and inclination to print almost all poets, surely one of them will have the sense to publish Mr. Drinan.

A Little Treasury of Modern Poetry is a standard Oscar Williams production: a preface which is sometimes ordinary sense, and sometimes a Cry from the Heart of the Poet ("Now I like high and serious poetry to such a degree that I cannot imagine life worth living without it. . . . Since with God all things are possible, poets and readers in unison may work their own miracle by which the human heart may yet so enlarge that it outweighs the atomic bomb"); oval Portraits of the Poets; a dust-jacket that crams down the gullets of the hungry sheep this "authoritative collection of the best poems written during the last fifty years," and that ends, as always, with the truthful statement that W. H. Auden prefers the poetry of Oscar Williams to that of Wallace Stevens and Dylan Thomas. (At this point I always blush and wish that the grasses were waving over me and over Auden too.) After looking unbelievingly at "The Great Lover" and "The Man with the Hoe" and "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" and "Chimborazo, Cotopaxi" and "They Went Forth to Battle but They Always Fell"; after reading poems by Ben Maddow, Helen Hoyt, Frederick Mortimer Clapp, Edith Wyatt, Esther Matthews, and many another; after looking in vain for a single poem by Robert Lowell, Sturge Moore, Henry Reed, Howard Baker, and many another; after finding in the Light Verse section Yeats' wonderful "John Kinsella's Lament for Mrs. Mary Moore"; after working a way through excessive wastes of Barker and Derwood and Fuller and Manifold and Masefield and Symons and Prokosch and

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Wylie and Teasdale and Treece and John Hall Wheelock and—but I'm tired; after noticing what an extremely poor job of selection Mr. Williams has done with Auden, Bridges, Hardy, Housman, Pound, MacNeice, Graves, Moore, and others—after all this, the reader may feel like damning Mr. Williams and his works without one further thought. But he shouldn't; Mr. Williams is, I think, the best of this crew of professional anthologists, and his anthology has plenty of good things to go along with the bad: great quantities of Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Auden, Tate, Frost, and other fine poets; some, though not enough, Empson and Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop and William Carlos Williams; and seldom-anthologized poems like "Missing Dates," "Roosters," "Song for the Clatter-Bones," "Scyros," "Starlight like Intuition Pierced the Twelve," "John Kinsella's Lament," and several others. (Also, the book has the merit of containing a considerably larger selection of Oscar Williams' poems than I have ever seen in any other anthology. There are nine of his poems—and five of Hardy's. It takes a lot of courage to like your own poetry almost twice as well as Hardy's.)

Mr. Williams is clever enough to print many of those poems that have become limitedly famous among intelligent readers and critics; and in spite of the mass of bad poetry that weighs it down, his anthology gives a forcible impression of all the good poetry that has been written in the last fifty or sixty years. Mr. Williams has a real taste for good poetry; that he has just as real a taste for bad, spoils his book. He has a soft spot in his heart—a softer spot, I mean—for any young English or English-educated or English-influenced poet who gushes, and as a result his Treasury is haunted by a flock of maundering harpies who insist on giving you a pound of their heart's blood with any random ounce of sense.

Anyone at all interested in poetry should buy *Poems 1938-45,* by Robert Graves (just as he should buy William Carlos Williams' *Patterson* and Elizabeth Bishop's *North and South*), if only to get one poem, "To Juan at the Winter Solstice." It is one of the most beautiful poems of our century, and will surely be delighting people hundreds of years from now. It is far and away the best poem in the book; but the other poems are a pleasure to read even when they are inconsequential—their texture is so accomplished and personal, so terse, self-sufficient, and dryly or grotesquely or individually necessary, that the reader has the superstitious and wholly mistaken illusion that the mediocre ones are mediocre only because Mr. Graves didn't bother to write anything so vulgar and alienated-from-himself as a successful poem. The technique of the poems is unusually objective and "classical"—a great deal of English and classical poetry is behind the way they are written—since metres and forms are things Mr. Graves can accept and transform as easily as he accepts and transforms the gods and ghosts and other historical beings that live on in the enchanting Hades of his novels; but what the poems say is sometimes wonderfully and sometimes rather disas-

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trously the expression of his own peculiar being. He says that he writes poetry only for poets—but sometimes he writes it for one poet, and it is only as we approximate to that poet that we get the full value of the poems. But his new poems are not, generally, as whimsical or special-case as most of his old ones: he hasn't withered into truth, but has been gnarled and warped and furrowed into an extraordinarily individual rightness which is sometimes "true" as well. Most of what successful poems there are in this book are small-scale, one-sided, too close to the (often beautifully witty or odd) Satires and Grotesques which follow them; nevertheless, Mr. Graves is one of the few poets alive who can write a first-rate poem, and one of the very few who are getting much better as they get older. If I were Clement Attlee I'd pension or imprison Mr. Graves to get him to write more poems: certainly either action would seem matter-of-course to Robert Graves.

Denis Devlin is plainly a writer of intelligence and information, and he has a gift for language—for MacNeice's language, especially; but it doesn't seem to me that he has yet managed to make a good poem out of what he has. He hasn't enough heart or concentration, or enough realization of the demands the poem makes upon the poet—the demands that exclude not only bad and mediocre, but a great many good details from the completed work. He concentrates from instant to instant upon the parts, usually very rhetorical parts, and lets the whole take care of itself; he has a distracting method—persisted in for its own sake, regardless of the needs of the subject—of continually thinking about other people's poems or remarks, his own historical or geographical or cultural information, and making so many overt or covert allusions to all this that the reader realizes that he is being taken on an expensive, cultivated, expected digression, a Grand Tour. There is something rhetorical, unevenly assertive, collage-y, sophisticated about the poems; the poet is extraordinarily conscious of surfaces—as a child he must have mirror-fought as other children pillow-fight. It is unjust to tell readers that Mr. Devlin is a diplomat, since they have a fair chance of guessing that from the poems.

> *. . . Bolder than the peasant tiger whose autumn beauty*
> *Sags in the expletive kill, or the sacrifice*
> *Of dearth puffed positive in the stance of duty . . .*

Surely the English Triumvirate could have sued Mr. Devlin for all this—flattery. *Stance!* Why, this is Norpois' attitude to a cliché: one imagines Mr. Devlin shaking hands with the first Roosevelt and murmuring, "Bully!" At his best Mr. Devlin is very different:

> *Magnificence, this terse-lit, star-quartz universe,*
> *Woe, waste, and magnificence, my soul!*

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But he is always jarring in and out of fit; he has such an inveterate, insensate passion for bad rhetorical effects and other people's rhetorical effects that, after the hundredth mesmeric echo of MacNeice, it is hard not to forsake him for that better and far more sympathetic poet. One reads

> *. . . Come up! Up up! The thunder at one with your voices in order*
> *chants, things*
> *Are with you, rolling her rump, Earth in bacchantic rumbas*
> *grave swings . . .*

and reflects, "with an awed contempt," that Tennyson had to write "Locksley Hall," Auden his parody of it, and MacNeice his "Eclogue at Christmas," in order that this couplet and its wretched siblings might exist.

Mr. Devlin has a rather poor and arbitrary ear, generally; he writes in everything from free verse to incredibly long, mechanical, and lolloping lines. In his poems there is too much conscientious and jagged "brilliance," too much description for description's sake, too many adjectives; the poems are always too *something;* calm or proportion or rightness is almost constitutionally lacking. Still, he is witty, knowing, and forceful; his worse poems, plainly, are his earlier ones; and few poets understand better just how complicated the world is. He is so extraordinarily uneven that it is not right to judge him by the ludicrously quotable junk which infests his book; it is fairest to think of his possibilities, which—one sees from the best fragments of his work—are good if he can ever forget about himself and his audience and the way people write poetry, and remember only his subject and its poem.

Paterson (*Book I*) seems to me the best thing William Carlos Williams has ever written; I read it seven or eight times, and ended up lost in delight. It seems a shame to write a little review of it, instead of going over it page by page, explaining and admiring. And one hates to quote much, since the beauty, delicacy, and intelligence of the best parts depend so much upon their organization in the whole; quoting from it is like humming a theme and expecting the hearer to guess from that its effect upon its third repetition in a movement. I have used this simile deliberately, because—over and above the organization of argument or exposition—the organization of *Paterson* is musical to an almost unprecedented degree: Mr. Williams introduces a theme that stands for an idea, repeats it over and over in varied forms, develops it side by side with two or three more themes that are being developed, recurs to it time and time again throughout the poem, and echoes it for ironic or grotesque effects in thoroughly incongruous contexts. Sometimes this is done with the greatest complication and delicacy; he wants to introduce a red-bird whose call will stand for the clear speech of nature, in the

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midst of all the confusion and ugliness in which men could not exist except for "imagined beauty where there is none": so he says in disgust, "Stale as a whale's breath: breath!/ Breath!" and ten lines later (during which three themes have been repeated and two of them joined at last in a "silent, uncommunicative," and satisfying resolution) he says that he has

> *Only of late, late! begun to know, to*
> *know clearly (as through clear ice) whence*
> *I draw my breath or how to employ it*
> *clearly—if not well:*
>
> *Clearly!*
> *speaks the red-breast his behest. Clearly!*
> *clearly!*

These double exclamations have so prepared for the bird's call that it strikes you, when you are reading the poem, like the blow which dissolves an enchantment. And really the preparation has been even more complicated: two pages before there was the line "divorce! divorce!" and half a page before the birds and weeds by the river were introduced by

> *. . . white, in*
> *the shadows among the blue-flowered*
> *Pickerel-weed, in summer, summer! if it should*
> *ever come . . .*

If you want to write a long poem which doesn't stick to one subject, but which unifies a dozen, you can learn a great deal from *Paterson.* But I do not know how important these details of structure will seem to an age which regards as a triumph of organization that throwing-out-of-blocks-upon-the-nursery-floor which concludes *The Waste Land,* and which explains its admiration by the humorless literalness of believing that a poet represents fragments by eliminating metre, connectives, and logic from the verses which describe the fragments.

The subject of *Paterson* is: How can you tell the truth about things? —that is, how can you find a language so close to the world that the world can be represented and understood in it?

> *Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls*
> *its spent waters forming the outline of his back. He*
> *lies on his right side, head near the thunder*
> *of the water filling his dreams! Eternally asleep,*
> *his dreams walk about the city where he persists*
> *incognito. Butterflies settle on his stone ear.*

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How can he—this city that is man—find the language for what he dreams and sees and is, the language without which true knowledge is impossible? He starts with the particulars ("Say it, no ideas but in things") which stream to him like the river, "rolling up out of chaos,/ a nine months' wonder"; with the interpenetration of everything with everything, "the drunk the sober; the illustrious/ the gross; one":

It is the ignorant sun
rising in the slot of
hollow suns risen, so that never in this
world will a man live well in his body
save dying—and not know himself
dying . . .

The water falls and then rises in "floating mists, to be rained down and/ regathered into a river that flows/ and encircles"; the water, in its time, is "combed into straight lines/ from that rafter of a rock's/ lip," and attains clarity; but the people are like flowers that the bee misses, they fail and die and "Life is sweet, they say"—but their speech has failed them, "they do not know the words/ or have not/ the courage to use them," and they hear only "a false language pouring—a/ language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without/ dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear." And the language available to them, the language of scholarship and science and the universities, is

a bud forever green
tight-curled, upon the pavement, perfect
in justice and substance but divorced, divorced
from its fellows, fallen low—
Divorce is
the sign of knowledge in our time,
divorce! divorce!

Girls walk by the river at Easter and one, bearing a willow twig in her hand as Artemis bore the moon's crescent bow,

holds it, the gathered spray,
upright in the air, the pouring air,
strokes the soft fur—

Ain't they beautiful!

(How could words show better than these last three the touching half-success, half-failure of their language?) And Sam Patch, the drunken frontier hero who jumped over the Falls with his pet bear, could *say*

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only: "Some things can be done as well as others"; and Mrs. Cumming, the minister's wife, shrieked unheard and fell unseen from the brink; and the two were only

a body found next spring
frozen in an ice-cake; or a body
fished next day from the muddy swirl—

both silent, uncommunicative.

The speech of sexual understanding, of natural love, is represented by three beautifully developed themes: a photograph of the nine wives of a Negro chief; a tree standing on the brink of the waterfall; and two lovers talking by the river:

We sit and talk and the
silence speaks of the giants
who have died in the past and have
returned to those scenes unsatisfied
and who is not unsatisfied, the
silent, Singac the rock-shoulder
emerging from the rocks—and the giants
live again in your silence and
unacknowledged desire . . .

But now the air by the river "brings in the rumors of separate worlds," and the poem is dragged from its highest point in the natural world, from the early, fresh, and green years of the city, into the slums of Paterson, into the collapse of this natural language, into "a delirium of solutions," into the back streets of that "great belly/ that no longer laughs but mourns/ with its expressionless black navel love's/ deceit." Here is the whole failure of Paterson's ideas and speech, and he is forced to begin all over; Part II of the poem ends with the ominous "No ideas but/ in the facts."

Part III opens with this beautiful and unexpected passage:

How strange you are, you idiot!
So you think because the rose
is red that you shall have the mastery?
The rose is green and will bloom,
overtopping you, green, livid
green when you shall no more speak, or
taste, or even be. My whole life
has hung too long upon a partial victory.

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The underlying green of the facts always cancels out the red in which we had found our partial, temporary, aesthetic victory; and the poem now introduces the livid green of the obstinate and compensating lives, the lifeless perversions of the industrial city: here are the slums and the adjoining estate with its acre hothouse and weedlike orchids and French maid whose sole duty is to "groom/ the pet Pomeranians—who sleep"; here is the university with its clerks

> *spitted on fixed concepts like*
> *roasting hogs, sputtering, their drip sizzling*
> *in the fire*
>
> *Something else, something else the same.*

Then (in one of the fine prose quotations—much altered by the poet, surely—with which the verse is interspersed) people drain the lake there, all day and all night long kill the eels and fish with sticks, carry them away in baskets; there is nothing left but the mud. The sleeping Paterson, "moveless," envies the men who could run off "toward the peripheries—to other centers, direct" for some "loveliness and/ authority in the world," who could leap like Sam Patch and be found "the following spring, frozen in/ an ice cake." But he goes on thinking to the very bitter end, reproduces all the ignorance and brutality of the city; and he understands its pathos and horror:

> *And silk spins from the hot drums to a music*
> *of pathetic souvenirs, a comb and nail-file*
> *in an imitation leather case—to*
> *remind him, to remind him! and*
> *a photograph-holder with pictures of himself*
> *between the two children, all returned*
> *weeping, weeping—in the back room*
> *of the widow who married again, a vile tongue*
> *but laborious ways, driving a drunken*
> *husband . . .*

Yet he contrasts his own real mystery, the mystery of people's actual lives, with the mystery that "the convent of the Little Sisters of/ St. Ann pretends"; and he understands the people "wiping the nose on sleeves, come here/ to dream"; he understands that

> *Things, things unmentionable*
> *the sink with the waste farina in it and*
> *lumps of rancid meat, milk-bottle-tops: have*
> *here a still tranquillity and loveliness . . .*

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Then Paterson "shifts his change," and an earthquake and a "remarkable rumbling noise" frighten but do not damage the city—this is told in the prose of an old newspaper account; and, at the end of the poem, he stands in the flickering green of the cavern under the waterfall (the dark, skulled world of consciousness), hedged in by the pouring torrent whose thunder drowns out any language; "the myth/ that holds up the rock,/ that holds up the water thrives there—/ in that cavern, that profound cleft"; and the readers of the poem are shown, in the last words of the poem,

> *standing, shrouded there, in that din,*
> *Earth, the chatterer, father of all*
> *speech . . . .*

It takes several readings to work out the poem's argument (it is a poem that *must* be read over and over), and it seemed to me that I could do most for its readers by roughly summarizing that argument. There are hundreds of things in the poem that deserve specific mention. The poem is weakest in the middle of Part III—I'd give page numbers if good old New Directions had remembered to put in any—but this is understandable and almost inevitable. Everything in the poem is interwoven with everything else, just as the strands of the Falls interlace: how wonderful and unlikely that this extraordinary mixture of the most delicate lyricism of perception and feeling with the hardest and homeliest actuality should ever have come into being! There has never been a poem more American (though the only influence one sees in it is that of the river scene from *Finnegans Wake*); if the next three books are as good as this one, which introduces "the elemental character of the place," the whole poem will be far and away the best long poem any American has written. I should like to write a whole article about it; I leave it unwillingly.

The best poems in Elizabeth Bishop's *North and South* are so good that it takes a geological event like *Paterson* to overshadow them; "The Fish" and "Roosters" are two of the most calmly beautiful, deeply sympathetic poems of our time. "The Monument," "The Man-Moth," "The Weed," the first "Song for a Colored Singer," and one or two others are extremely fine; and there are charming poems on a smaller scale, or beautiful fragments—for instance, the end of "Love Lies Sleeping." Miss Bishop is capable of the most outlandish ingenuity—who else could have made a witty mirror-image poem out of the fact that we are bilaterally symmetrical?—but is grave, calm, and tender at the same time. It is odd how pleasant and sympathetic her poems are, in these days when the average literate poet had rather walk down children like Mr. Hyde than weep over them like Swinburne (or else do both at the same time, like Kenneth Patchen), and when many a poem is gruesome occupa-

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tional therapy for a poet who stays legally innocuous by means of it. The poet whom the poems of *North and South* present or imply is as attractively and unassumingly good as the poet of *Observations* and *What Are Years*—but simpler and milder, less driven into desperate straits or dens of innocence, and taking this Century of Polycarp more for granted. (When you read Miss Bishop's "Florida," a poem whose first sentence begins "The state with the prettiest name," and whose last sentence begins "The alligator, who has five distinct calls:/ friendliness, love, mating, war, and warning," you don't need to be told that the poetry of Marianne Moore was, in the beginning, an appropriately selected foundation for Miss Bishop's work.) Miss Bishop's poems are almost never forced; nobody understands better that there must be a wolf behind every *Wolf!* In her best work restraint, calm, and proportion are implicit in every detail of metre or organization or workmanship; instead of crying, with justice, "This is a world in which you can't get along," Miss Bishop's poems show that it is barely but perfectly possible—has been, that is, for her. Her work is unusually personal and honest in its wit, perception, and sensitivity—and in its restrictions too; all her poems have written underneath, *I have seen it.* She is morally so satisfactory,

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in poems like "The Fish" or "Roosters," because she understands so well that the wickedness and confusion of the age can explain and extenuate other people's wickedness and confusion, but not, for you, your own; that morality, for the individual, is usually a small, personal, statistical, but heartbreaking or heartwarming affair of omissions and commissions the greatest of which will seem infinitesimal, ludicrously beneath notice, to those who govern, rationalize, and deplore; that it is sometimes difficult and unnatural, but sometimes easy and natural, to "do well"; that beneath our life "there is inescapable hope, the pivot," so that in the revolution of things even the heartsick Peter can someday find "his dreadful rooster come to mean forgiveness"; that when you see the snapped lines trailing, "a five-haired beard of wisdom," from the great fish's aching jaw, it is then that victory fills "the little rented boat," that the oil on the bilgewater by the rusty engine is "rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!"—that you let the fish go.

Reading so much that is good, in this accidental three-months' collection, has made me feel how queer it is that *our* age should have poets like these. Why don't people admit what anybody must know: that here and now most people can't and don't read poetry, that the stupidest shepherd or potboy of any other age liked and understood poetry better than the average college graduate today? What does the public do for poets like Mr. Graves and Mr. Williams and Miss Bishop except mutter accusingly that it "can't understand them," neglecting to add that it can't understand Blake or Donne or Hopkins or Shakespeare either? Today poetry, like virtue, is its own reward. The average reader is as likely to understand or honor Miss Bishop or Mr. Williams or Mr. Graves as is the average monkey; their poems are a lonely triumph of integrity, knowledge, and affection.

RANDALL JARRELL

CRITICISM AND COMMON SENSE

DICKENS, DALI, AND OTHERS: STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE. *By George Orwell. Reynal and Hitchcock.* $2.50.

GEORGE ORWELL is a good, swingeing critic in a familiar British tradition, the tradition of John Dennis and Dr. Johnson, of William Gifford, of Macaulay and G. K. Chesterton. It is the tradition of "commonsensical" criticism, of the critical broadsword and even the battle-axe of downrightness and plain dealing and no nonsense, of "all theory is for it and all experience against it." We have had very few, if any, such critics in this country, for Poe, in spite of his neurotic harshness, was essentially of a different kidney, and I suppose no one would maintain

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that Mr. Bernard De Voto really qualifies. George Orwell himself is hardly a Johnson or a Macaulay, but he has a generous supply of the intellectual robustness (which must, one feels, have a physical basis), the freedom from mere abstractness, the impatience with "nonsense," the capacity for realistic perception, and the general bluntness that we associate with those names.

All this makes him an excellent writer on certain sorts of subjects. He is, for example, not only vigorous but really acute on the "popular culture" of his sub-title. The essays in this volume on "Boys' Weeklies," on the sub-literary or proto-literary fiction he deals with in "Raffles and Miss Blandish," and on the comic postcards of one Donald McGill—these essays not only furnish us with the richest information about the

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music-hall level of British culture to-day but throw a straight, direct, unblinking light on its frightening significance, for the "American" violence which the newer French writers so much admire has had its influence, or at least its parallels, on a low stratum of English popular literature. Orwell is admirable on this whole question, and his particular gifts make it possible for him to write sensibly and spiritedly about figures like Dickens, Kipling, and Wells; indeed, his long essay on Dickens brings out most of his best qualities. I don't know that anyone has shown quite so fully or so knowingly just what effect Dickens's urban-middle-class derivation had on his mentality, his imagination, and his sense of values. The claim that Dickens was a "revolutionary" writer in any well-defined, positive, or intellectually instructed sense is pretty well exploded in this piece.

One would look in it in vain, however, for the kind of insights one finds in Edmund Wilson's essay; and, in general, Orwell's talents are for the heftier jobs of criticism—jobs which need to be done—rather than for its more painful, prolonged, and patient tasks of discrimination. The old English impatience with "putting too fine a point upon it," the old English distrust of half-tones, of ambiguities, of personal and intellectual deviations, these are very strong in Orwell, and they not only incapacitate him for writing very well about a person like Yeats, but they inject an unpleasant note of anti-intellectualism and even philistinism into his better pieces.

There are uncomfortably too many jibes here at " 'enlightened' people," at what Orwell not very urbanely calls "pansy-left circles," at whipping-boy Marxists and liberals. There are too many dicta such as this: "The nineteenth-century Anglo-Indians, to name the least sympathetic of his [Kipling's] idols, were at any rate people who did things"—as they could not have been if their outlook had resembled E. M. Forster's. Or this: "It is a great thing in his [Kipling's] favour that he is not witty, not 'daring,' has no wish to *épater le bourgeois*. . . . Even his worst follies seem less shallow and less irritating than the 'enlightened' utterances of the same period, such as Wilde's epigrams or the collection of cracker-mottoes at the end of *Man and Superman*." Well, here is one reviewer who prefers Oscar Wilde's epigrams, if it comes to that, to the "very beautiful lines" from Kipling which Orwell quotes admiringly:

> *Oh, hark to the big drum calling,*
> *Follow me—follow me home!*

Heaven knows what sort of epithet one may draw down on one's head for saying this, but Orwell might well remember, for example, Dr. Johnson's famous and unfortunate remark (in 1776): "Nothing odd will

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do long. *Tristram Shandy* did not last." Commonsensical criticism can be curiously senseless.

We have by no means had a surfeit of it recently, however, on the level on which Orwell writes; and in the cultural situation that confronts us today—with so much pedantry, constipation, and pretense on the one hand and so much machine-tooled savagery on the other—Orwell's critical work is too humane at its core and too salutary in its main effects not to elicit a sense of gratitude.

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Arcadia in Italy

FASCISM DID not have a very great direct influence on Italian literature. Some attempts were made to create a sort of "official literature," but all these attempts failed. It was even proposed from various sources that the Fascist poets use Mussolini's "achievements" as the subject of a new heroic epic. But there were no poets. Italian writers, or at least many of them, limited their homage to tyranny to an external consent. Giuseppe Ungaretti, called Italy's best poet, dedicated to Mussolini a collection of poetry of the most crepuscular and least "heroic" nature one could possibly imagine. Nor was there in Italy an anti-Semitic literature worthy of that name. As a matter of fact there was nothing at all. The weight of Fascist oppression on literature in Italy was of a much more subtle nature. It forced Italian literature ever more into its tight circle of insincerity, rhetoric, and virtuosity. Blessed be the hand that opens a window in this stifling room.

Italian literature does not resemble any other literature. It is in a world all of its own, far from reality, disparaging of human values, tied to the patterns of an external Arcadia. A comma is more important than an idea. Well-turned phrases are what count. The abyss between authors and the public has become incredibly great.

The war, so ruinously lost, and the war of liberation which was the redemption of Italian youth, all this brought forth only rhetorical compositions in which could be found, at most, a bad imitation of certain French models which were

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in themselves mediocre. Now, in the atmosphere of liberty, the literary Messiahs are awaited. Italian authors, many of whom took an active and courageous part in the clandestine movement, have returned to their writing. As a sign of rebirth and resumption of normality, the first "literary prize" since the liberation has been awarded.

The winner of first place in the Milan Prize contest is a well-known author, Alberto Moravia. The monetary value of the prize, 100,000 lire, corresponds to about 350 dollars. Alberto Moravia is a Roman, half Jewish, and about forty years of age. When he was twenty-two years old he wrote an outstanding novel, *Gli Indifferenti,* a cold, deep analysis of the corruption of a certain stratum of the Italian bourgeoisie in Rome in the twenties. From then on Moravia, whose real name is Pincherle, has given proof of involution rather than evolution. There is no doubt that he is a sincere writer, yet very limited. The full possession of the means of expression, which came to him with intellectual maturity, has exposed those shortcomings (limitations in taste and, above all, limitations in imagination) which, at the time he wrote *Gli Indifferenti,* seemed only due to expediency and inexperience.

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The book seems to us to be truly representative of the sensibilities of its author, to whom no one denies a great facility of style, but who cannot go beyond his limited horizons and looks for little else in man except debasement. The end result is just another form of rhetoric. Moravia's chief merit lies in remaining outside of the Italian literary "Arcadia," the dream-world, and of writing with a certain synthetic style without undue subtilization and refinement.

The winner of the second prize (50,000 lire), Gianna Manzini, is on the other hand immersed up to the roots of her hair in that so-called Arcadian style. Gianna Manzini is a supersensitive and plaintive writer who has enjoyed fifteen

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years of very solid prestige in Italian literary circles; the new aesthetes fall on their knees before her unreadable pages. We cannot deny that at the base of Manzini's writings there is a fresh and deep-felt sensibility, but since one is forced to judge by the results, we have to say that it would have been much wiser to point her out as example number one of how *not* to write. The content of her novels and short stories is always exasperatingly the same. It consists of her lucubrations, her dreams, her remembrances, her oblivion—all in the affected pose of the eternal child who has, however, been conveniently initiated into the mysteries of love. No one can deny that potentially she has good lyrical qualities, but her lyricism never goes beyond potentiality.

As for her style—aside from the fact that many of her pages seem to have been written with pen dipped in honey—it is obscure, allusive, hermetic. For the sake of the record, the title of her book is *Lettere all'editore, variazioni e novelle* (Letters to the Editor; Variations and Short Stories).

Carlo Levi of Turin, also awarded a 50,000 lire prize, lived for many years in France, where he earned a reputation as painter. He is forty-three years old and until a few months ago was unknown as a writer. Recently he published his first novel, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Christ Stopped at Eboli), which he wrote in Florence while hiding from the Germans, and which is now being prepared for American publication. This book is earning Levi wide fame in Italy. Persecuted for political reasons by Fascism even before he was persecuted for racial reasons, Levi was sent to the *confino* and detained from the middle of 1935 to the middle of 1936 in a small village in Lucania, at the southern tip of the Italian peninsula. *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* is the story of that year. It is a book so rich in fantasy, with scenes so plastic and full of life, and is such an acute attempt to interpret, in the light of legends, the primitive life of the people of Lucania, that one is prompted to ask if Carlo Levi has not perhaps written the first real book of Italy's contemporary literature. Certainly a first reading of this book makes a very great im-

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pression. Reading it a second time, one realizes that there is a certain amount of amateurishness, a certain fluent journalistic style, and also one sees Levi's difficulty in understanding fully the closed, deep Catholicism of the peasants among whom he lived.

In spite of these things, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* is the only worthwhile book to come out of the Milan Prize. It is a book bought by everyone and read by everyone. Unlike the other two prize-winners, its public is not confined to those few who have been initiated into the intricacies of the hermetic style. This is a book which holds its own in the panorama of modern European literature.

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